ENGAGING BOOKS

J. M. Edelstein [1924–1996]

Interviewed by Richard Cándida Smith

Art History Oral Documentation Project

Compiled under the auspices
of the
Getty Research Institute for the History of
Art and the Humanities

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

This interview is sealed and will not be available for public access until 1 April, 2001.

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Frontispiece: J. M. Edelstein, National Gallery of Art, circa 1985. Photograph courtesy of Eleanor Edelstein.

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The first three sessions of this interview were recorded at J. M. Edelstein's home in Bristol, Rhode Island. The last session was recorded at the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, California. The interviewer on both occasions was Richard Cándida Smith, Associate Professor of History at the University of Michigan. A total of 21 hours were recorded. The transcript was edited by Katherine P. Smith.

CURRICULUM VITAE

J. M. Edelstein [August 10, 1925– June 12, 1996]
Married Eleanor Rockwell, 1951; two children

Education:

1942	High School graduation from Baltimore City College, Baltimore, Md. Classical course.
1942–43	Johns Hopkins U., Baltimore, Md. Military service April 1943–January 1946.
1945	U. of Florence, Florence, Italy. Italian history and literature.
1946-47	Johns Hopkins U. Majored in history. A.B.*cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa.
1947-49	Johns Hopkins U. Graduate studies, Italian history and literature, minor in English.
1949–50	U. of Florence. Graduate studies in Italian history and literature. Fellowship from Fulbright Commission and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Government.
1952–53	U. of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. Master of Arts in Library Science.

Professional Career:

1953–54	Internship Program, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
1955–62	Reference Librarian and Supervisor of the Reading Room of the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress.
1962–64	Bibliographer for Medieval and Renaissance Studies in the library of the U. of California, Los Angeles, California.
1964–66	Librarian for Special Collections at New York U., New York, N. Y.
1966–72	Humanities Bibliographer in the University Research Library and Lecturer in Bibliography in the School of Library Services of the U. of California, Los Angeles, California.
1972–86	Chief Librarian, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
1986–95	Senior Bibliographer and Resource Coordinator, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, California [now the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles, California].
1995–96	Consultant, Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, and Brown U.

Professional Memberships:

1963	Board of Judges, Western Book Exhibition.
1970–71	Advisory Committee to the Rare Book Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries, American Library Association.
1968–72	Scholarship and Fellowship Committee of the U. of California, Los Angeles, School of Library Service.
1969–72	Committee on Research and Publications of the U. of California, Los Angeles, School of Library Service.
1970–72	U. California, Los Angeles, Council of Phi Beta Kappa, Eta Chapter of California.
1970–72	Committee on Public Lectures of the U. of California at Los Angeles.
1973–77	Folger Shakespeare Library British Studies Fellowship Selection Committee.
1974–96	Advisory Board, *First Printings of American Authors*.
1978	Elected a member, American Antiquarian Society.
1980–96	Board of Advisors, Beyond Baroque Foundation, Venice, California.
1983–96	Board of Directors, Center for Book Arts, New York, N.Y.
1988–96	Board of Advisors, Franklin Furnace, New York, N.Y.

Honors, Awards and Fellowships:

1942–43	Two-year scholarship from Baltimore City College for study at Johns Hopkins U.
1947	Phi Beta Kappa, Johns Hopkins U.
1946–49	Teaching Fellowship, Johns Hopkins U.
1949–50	Fellowship from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Government for a year's study at Florence U.
1949–50	Travel grant from Fulbright Commission for a year's study at the U. Florence.
1983	Travel and study grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy and the National Gallery of Art to pursue Vespasiano da Bisticci studies in the archives and libraries of Florence, Italy.
1985	Travel and resident fellowship from Herzog August Bibliothek. Wolfenbüttel, Germany, to pursue Vespasiano da Bisticci studies.
1986–87	John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship award to do a history and bibliography of the Cummington Press and Abattoir Editions.

Publications (Partial):

"The Ordinal of 1793," *The Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions* 12, no. 4 (August 1955): 181–183.

"Some Early Editions of *The Consulate of the Sea,*" *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 15 (1957): 119–125.

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"A Lincoln Family Gathering," *The Library of Congress Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions* 18, no. 1 (November 1960): 1–4.

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"American Book Publishing," *America Illustrated*, no. 9–80 (September 1965): 55–77.

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A Selected Catalog of Books From the Library of Don Cameron Allen. Mandeville Department of Special Collections, U. of California, San Diego, 1968.

"On Disposal of Duplicates," *The 1968 AB Bookman's Yearbook*, 1968, Part II, pp.

6–7.

"Kate's Writings: A Selected Bibliography," *Wilson Library Bulletin* 44, no. 5 (January 1970): 529–534.

"The Poet as Reader: Wallace Stevens and His Books," *The Book Collector* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 53–68.

Wallace Stevens: A Descriptive Bibliography. Pittsburgh: U. of Pittsburgh Press, 1974.

"Petrarch: Honored as Europe's First Truly Modern Man," *Smithsonian* 5, no. 1 (April 1974): 48–55.

"The Bibliographical Society of America, 1904–1979," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 73, no. 4 (1979): 389–422.

Compiled *A Jargon Society Checklist 1951–1979.* Pamphlet to mark a Jargon exhibition at Books & Co., 939 Madison Avenue, New York City, March 15–April 14, 1979.

"Looking Across at Silvretta," *Conjunctions: I, A Festschrift in Honor of James Laughlin* (Winter 1981–82): 103–104.

"The Library and the Museum," *Immagine del Museo negli Anni '80,* Supplemento I to *Bolletino d'Arte*, Rome (1982): 24–27.

"Claude Fredericks and the Banyan Press: A Bibliographical Checklist," *American Book Collector* 7, no. 3 (March 1986): 30–37.

SESSION ONE: 4 NOVEMBER, 1994

[Tape I, Side One]

SMITH: The question we always start off with is, where and when were you born?

EDELSTEIN: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in the Christchurch Infirmary, on Broadway, which no longer exists. I was born on July 31, 1924, which, as my mother and the rest of the family constantly reminded me, was the hottest day that there ever had been. The hospital was a wonderful Victorian building, which I remember from my childhood.

SMITH: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents?

EDELSTEIN: My parents were Joseph and Irene. My mother's maiden name was Schwartz. She lived in Baltimore with her family, and my father was from New York. I can't remember the story, whether or not she went to New York and they met there, or he came to Baltimore. I think, if I remember correctly, something brought him to Baltimore . . . friends or sightseeing. Probably mutual friends, something like that. They married slightly more than a year before I was born, and my father took root in Baltimore.

SMITH: What kind of work did he do?

EDELSTEIN: He did all sorts of things. He sold real estate, insurance, and he had a sort of general store. He wasn't a man of enormous education, and he most often worked for himself. There were times when he worked for other people, but he

preferred working for himself. He had a grocery store at one time, then he had a dry goods store. The time that I particularly remember was when he sold real estate. My father did any number of things, and life was up and down, good and bad. I'm talking in economic terms; we were essentially a poor family. I'm a Depression person. I was born in 1924, as I told you, and when my sister [Nadine] came along in 1929 the joke was always in the family that she triggered the big stock market fall and the Depression. It was a joke that she never appreciated, even to this day. We lived through some rough times, but also some very good times.

My father was a wonderful man. He was a very gentle, very sweet kind of person, really the essence of goodness. He took his worldly fates very hard, but he was always good natured. I think I can count on one hand, if my memory serves me, the times when he was not good natured. He always saw the bright side of things, a real optimist. He died when he was eighty-nine, and outlived my mother by ten years. Those ten years were unhappy for him because he and my mother were extremely close. All married couples are close, but it was a very observable thing with them, and her death was a long and painful one.

If my father always saw the glass half full, my mother always saw it half empty. She was much more moody, and she was much better educated. Before they met she had been a secretary, and I think a doctor's assistant. Of the two, she certainly had more intellectual pretensions. My father had all the right instincts, but

he didn't have the education. My mother's personality wasn't as outgoing as my father's, but they made a good combination. There were some really very serious downs during their life together. [My father] wasn't cut off from his family, but there was that distance, and people didn't travel back and forth as much as they do today. So my sister and I, in our growing up period, never really knew my father's family. My mother's family was right there, and we knew more than we wanted to know about them. They had a lot of influence on us. But it has only been in relatively recent years that I have a feeling of family with my father's [relatives] and that's because as one gets older you realize how important those things are. My wife [Eleanor Rockwell Edelstein] and I have made a considerable effort in that respect.

My grandfather [Nathan Schwartz] and grandmother [Sarah Schwartz] were as much formative influences on my life as my mother and father—more so I think than in many families. My mother and her whole family were very close. It really was a different time; it could have been the model of the extended family that we talk about today. We practically lived in my grandfather and grandmother's house. I actually did live with them for a long time. My sister is five years younger than I, and during the early part of her life she was seriously sick and had to be hospitalized for long periods. There's a form of diabetes that affects only children, and she had that, plus all kinds of other awful things, the names of which I don't remember, if I ever did know them. There was one period when I was about six or seven, the time when kids

first go to school, in which my sister spent nearly a year in the hospital. There was a photograph in the *Baltimore Sun* of my mother and my sister in the hospital. I guess people thought she might not live, or she'd be an invalid or something, but as fate has it, for a woman who is sixty-five now, she is relatively healthy. She came out of all that with the passing of childhood. When my mother moved into the hospital with her, there I was with my father, and he had a business to run. At various times, and this was one of them, we were sort of living over the store. Times were hard in the early thirties. It was difficult for my father to take care of me and he didn't have money to hire somebody, so I went to live with my grandfather and grandmother, which pleased me enormously. I lived with them that whole year. I remember the year very well, because they too lived over a store.

My grandfather and grandmother were very interesting people—this was my mother's father and mother, you understand. My grandmother was I guess the prototype of a certain East European Jewish woman of the time. Both she and my grandfather had come from the part of Europe known to Jews as the Pale, that area between Poland and Russia which constantly was shifting back and forth. In one generation it was Poland and another generation it was Russia. They came of course in that wave of immigration before the First World War, around the turn of the century, when there was such a large immigration of not only Jews but all sorts of people.

After a very difficult life of pogroms and oppression and poverty, my grandmother was very, very strong. She really kept the family together. She was very energetic. She could do everything from cooking fantastic meals to running a store to arranging any imaginable need of life you could think of. She was very religious in the strict sense of the word, by which I mean observant of rules and formulas and that sort of thing. I suspect that my grandmother was illiterate, but she knew the first five books of the Bible by heart. She knew the entire prayer book by heart—all of the prayers and blessings for various ceremonial occasions. Not only that, she knew how to point them out in the prayer book, you see; she had that much understanding of it. For her, as for many other peoples who feel this way also, the prayer book was a very holy thing. If you dropped it on the floor you were committing a sin, and you had to atone for it, and there was a special prayer to say when you picked the book up from the floor.

So, there she was, a very warm, strong, and motherly grandmother, and a very important influence in my life. My head is filled with fairy tales and family stories, made-up stories, ghost stories, all kinds of things. She was very suspicious of course and quite ignorant of the ways of the world, but full of this rich lore that had been passed down to her in the same way. She was very outgoing; the house was always filled with people. Both my grandmother and my grandfather were very well liked and well thought-of in the community.

Now, my grandfather was a very different sort. He too was a very warm and welcoming individual, but he was a little more stand-offish than my grandmother. He was the supposed intellectual of that household, and he could read, there's no question about that because that's all he did. They had a corner store [where they] sold practically everything. In those days cigarettes were sold by the piece; somebody could come in and buy one cigarette. I think you could get a cigarette for two cents, or two cigarettes for one cent. As a little boy it was my job at one time to stand behind the counter and dispense these things, but I don't remember that in detail. There was an ice chest . . . everything went into it, because the workmen of the area would come in, and my grandmother would have sandwiches [for them], and that sort of thing.

SMITH: What area of Baltimore was this?

EDELSTEIN: This was in east Baltimore, on the corner of Lloyd and Central Avenue. Now if you go to Baltimore that area looks like a slum. It wasn't much more than a slum in the 1920s and 1930s when I knew it very, very well. But it was a sort of double ghetto. It was the heart of the immigrant Jewish world in Baltimore, and it was also a very active commercial area. My grandfather and grandmother's place was on the corner. If you had wanted to put something in the center of things you couldn't have chosen a better spot. It must have been a shack, although it was wonderful to me in my childhood.

So much was happening there all the time. At one end, as you looked down Lloyd Street, were mostly Jewish shops, with a sprinkling of Italian—the butcher and the baker and a paint shop, a hardware store, a dry goods store, and one thing or another. Lloyd Street was lively, it was wonderful. A block away, at the end of Lloyd Street and around the corner, were the two principal synagogues for that group of Jewish immigrants. There were the older groups that had come to the United States from other parts of Europe, principally Germany, a couple of decades earlier, who had already reached a different plateau and in many ways actually looked down at this new group. But in any case, everything that you wanted was right there.

Around the corner in the other direction, up Central Avenue, was a public library, which in some ways was the beginning of it all. I have a wonderful photograph of my father and me. He's very elegant; he's wearing a gray homburg. He always was a very elegant man. Until his late years when he couldn't take care of himself, I never saw my father unshaven or without his moustache and without a tie; he was always "picked up," as they say. [In this photograph] he has his homburg on, and a suit, and I'm standing with him holding me on top of the hedge, because I was a very little boy, and I'm also all dressed up. I don't know when I first went into the library, but I knew it was important; it meant something to me.

There was a street that ran parallel to Lloyd Street, where there was a lumberyard. We took that street to go up to the synagogue, and that lumberyard was

the most marvelous place to go by because it smelled so good. You could smell the wood being sawed and taken apart, and the big trucks would come with these huge tree limbs and tree trunks, and it was deep; it went way, way back. Occasionally, if the workmen were in a good mood, they'd let you come in and pick up marvelous pieces of wood, little pieces that had been sawed off, and the smell of that sawdust was just heaven. I can smell it as we talk now!

But then facing my grandfather and grandmother's shack and the store were railroad tracks, because on the far side of Central Avenue was the coal yard, and a coal car could come down and unload and reload. Next door to the coal yard was a scrap metal place. It sounds terrible, and it probably was terrible, but to a child it was absolutely heaven and there was always something to watch. Central Avenue was wide—you can still see that even today. I don't know if the tracks are still there or not, but it was wide, and there was a crane, and on the end of the crane was a huge round magnet. I don't know what the process was, but it could be magnetized or de-magnetized, so that the crane would lift up these various pieces of metal—parts of cars and all this marvelous, shiny stuff. Then the crane would move and it would drop down, and this was an enormously heavy, big thing, sort of cup-like. It took on a personality of its own, this object. So there was the coal yard, and the scrap metal crane and the train moving back and forth all the time.

I didn't have any curiosity or interest in the people who [oversaw these

activities]—I didn't think they were interesting. But the workmen were black men, and they were the customers of my grandfather and grandmother's shop. They would come in and [order] sandwiches, and the sandwiches were absolutely awful. I remember the first time I tried one. One of the most popular choices was a cheese sandwich. The bread was supplied by a baker, and it was not very good bread, it seemed to me. It may very well have been stale. But the slices were very thick. [My grandmother] would slice two huge pieces of bread, put them down, and put an enormous slice of rat cheese between them—you know, the yellow stuff. We called it rat cheese and I don't know what it's called today. I'm sure there's some fancy name for it now.

Well, I used to look at these sandwiches with [longing]. I just had to have one. For a long, long time I wasn't allowed to have one. They may not have been kosher, or they may just not have been considered proper food for a child, or whatever. But finally I got around to having one, and I don't know how that came about. I may just have sneaked in and made one for myself, but I can remember to this day the disappointment, because it was uneatable. There was mustard, but it wasn't very good; it came out of this huge jar. The bread was dry, the cheese was dry, and I thought it was awful. I couldn't understand it; these men would eat it with such gusto. They would have a sandwich and a drink. One of my jobs then was to get drinks out of these huge red or multicolored things with ice in them. The ice man

naturally would always come very early in the morning with his leather apron, to put the ice in. It was my job to store the soda bottles and take them out, and taking them out was always the worst part, especially as the day grew long, because you had to put your hand down in this very, very icy water. That was my job from time to time.

So [the men] would eat these awful sandwiches, and drinks, and then there was always pie. There was a separate little section of glass, or something resembling glass, and there were these awful pies—huge, triangular pieces of pie. They didn't eat the pie with a knife and fork. They would carry all [the food] and they'd sit around the place or go outside if the weather was good. [I remember] their talk, their patois, and their songs. There was a lot of music, and sometimes you couldn't tell when talk would stop and singing would begin. They were very rough I'm sure, but I never felt any [fear]. I didn't know then that I was observing an interesting culture. I don't think the word "culture" was used in that sense in those times, but of course I was, and I'm very happy about that now.

I think it's been observed many times that as you get older the memories of things that happened to you or that you observed when you were young seem to become clearer. In my case it's willful; I actually *try* to remember these things, and some of this may have to do with being married to a cultural anthropologist. Life there was really quite unusual, first of all because I wasn't with my father and mother. I'm sure I was spoiled rotten; I was really the jewel, the light in their eyes, and I could

do no wrong. I think they did all the right things by me. One thing they did not do right, according to the law, was send me to school.

SMITH: You didn't go to school?

EDELSTEIN: I went to school, but late. And they sent me to Hebrew school, not public school.

SMITH: Well, that's school.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, but I wasn't getting an education according to the requirements of the law. I've repeated this story so many times, but it helps to clarify these things, as you know. In order to get down to the cellar, you had to go outside. There were these wooden doors that opened wide, and then you would go down the stairs into this dirt cellar, which was wonderful. I loved to go down there because my grandfather had barrels of pickles, and pickled tomatoes, and jars of all sorts of wonderful stuff; it was full of secrets. Even when the cellar doors were closed, it was marvelous, because they were wooden doors and they were on a slant, and the sidewalk was wide, and I could play on those wooden doors. I'd sit on them and read, I'd sit on them and play with my blocks or toys, or just sit on them and watch the scene, you know—that was my territory.

One day I was sitting out there, playing or doing something on the cellar doors, and a lady came along and said, "Hello, little boy, what's your name?" and so on, and, "Where do you go to school?" Well, she marched into the place and had this

talk [with my grandparents], and the next day, or whenever, I was enrolled in the proper school. But actually there was some give and take about this, because I went into one school and then out of the school and then a compromise was made. I was sent to one school where in the morning I was taught in English, with proper curriculum for first grade or second grade or whatever this was—reading, writing, and arithmetic, which were rigorously taught in those days I am happy to say, and then in the afternoon there were Hebrew studies, religious studies.

SMITH: In the public school?

EDELSTEIN: No, in the same school; it was not a public school. I can't remember the sequence, but I did that for a year or more. All this happened during the year that I was living with my grandfather and grandmother. I went to a public school throughout my elementary and secondary education, but until quite late in my life I continued to go to the Hebrew school. I think I stopped going to the Hebrew school when I was about sixteen or maybe even seventeen, I can't remember.

SMITH: Were you learning modern Hebrew?

EDELSTEIN: I was learning ancient and modern Hebrew, both. Unfortunately I didn't apply myself to modern Hebrew as much as I would have liked. Mostly it was the study of the Hebrew texts, the commentaries on the Bible, of which there are many—ancient ones and medieval, and late medieval, and eighteenth century and so on. Then I spent a lot of time studying what was described as Jewish history, but they

were courses in European history. I've been very fortunate throughout my life in the teachers that I've had. In that school there was a man named Olitsky—I can't think of his first name—who was a brilliant historian. This was in my early teens. He left the Baltimore City College, which is where I went, to become professor of history at Dropsie College in Philadelphia, which is a great center of learning, devoted particularly to Hebraic studies. But then I studied a lot of history, language, biblical studies, religious studies, and just general historical studies, and at the same time the general curriculum was going on. The other day, one of those "game show questions" came up and somebody asked me what were the principal influences in my life. I didn't think very hard about it because it seemed so obvious. I could easily say they were my family, my teachers, and libraries.

SMITH: You say your family was quite observant then. Were your grandparents?

EDELSTEIN: Well, that's a very good question, because my mother and father, since they were not rebellious types, paid lip service to what they felt they had to do, particularly out of respect to their parents—my mother's parents in this particular case, since we didn't see much of my father's. His father had died when he was very young anyway; I never knew my grandfather on my father's side.

[Tape I, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: My grandmother on my father's side died just about the time I was born, or when I was very young. My father did not come from an observant household. Actually, in some ways, he came from a more worldly household than my mother, although she was better educated, or pretended to be. My father was devoted to his in-laws, I mean truly devoted to them, which he proved over and over again when there were troubled times, and when they needed care as they got older. Particularly my grandmother, because my grandfather died when I was fourteen. My grandmother lived on to quite an advanced age, and my father—not her daughter, but my father—was the one who took care of her.

In any case, they were observant sometimes and sometimes not. I don't think they thought very much about the question. That they were Jews, there was no question; they knew they were Jews, and I suppose they believed in God, but we never talked about those things at all.

SMITH: Was your family Zionist?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, yes, and that actually played a large part in my young life. Now let me interrupt because I'd like to come back to that. My grandfather and grandmother *were* observant. My grandmother was a zealot; it was almost too much. But for her everything was rote. Just as I suspect that she couldn't really read, so I suspect that her observance was . . . well, this is just the way it's done. When the time

comes to light the candles on Friday night that's what you do, and I didn't get from her or any of them any ideas about meaning. I had no idea what "spiritual" meant. I got fantastic lore, history, stories, wonderful rich stuff, but it was all rote; it was what you do, what we are, this is the kind of society we belong to. Nobody ever told me why you had to stand up when you said a certain prayer. Why couldn't you just sit down? Nobody ever explained that, or if they did explain, it was in terms that I'd never really understood. I got many more answers in school. They were not answers that I was satisfied with, but they were answers.

SMITH: In Hebrew school?

EDELSTEIN: In Hebrew school, yes. But even there there was a contradiction, because this man that I mentioned, Olitsky, was not an observant Jew. He was a Jew, but he was not observant. He was probably agnostic. I can't say that for sure, and I may be giving you an entirely wrong impression, but the history that we learned with him was social, cultural history of a certain group of people, and there was no relation to anything religious or spiritual involved. I've thought about this quite a lot because—and this must be true of a lot of people of my generation— on one hand so much of my life was infused with religious observance and ritual objects—books, the synagogue, the schedules, the dietary laws—but then there was also this other big world out there, this changing America, particularly in the years when I was growing up, and the attractions of other things, with very little overt relationship between the

two. And there was not very much, if any, relationship between these things that we had to observe, and *meaning*.

You never shake this off; it's always part of you. Those lessons you're taught or the observations that you make, the stories that you're told when you're young, become part of you. They're just there. You may stuff them down somewhere at the bottom of your mental, emotional and whatnot chest-of-drawers, but they are there. Sometimes you just forget them and sometimes you just accept them and sometimes they rise up or you bring them out and you play with them, and you go along with what may be a social demand or a cultural demand, and other times you make them a part of your life in the sense that you try to understand them and relate them to other things. I don't know, it's quite complex.

I am not observant, but I'm what other people have called a secular Jew. There's no question that I'm Jewish; that's me, that's a part of my life, and there are times when I actually find a great deal of pleasure and even emotional satisfaction in going to a synagogue. Not often, I have to say, because I am not terribly sympathetic with ritual for ritual's sake. But every now and then something occurs that's out of my control, and very often it will be a melody. Music plays a very large part in my life, purely as an absorber of it; I don't play any instrument anymore, but I listen to music all the time. Sometimes I'll hear a melody, and there's nothing stronger than that. Or I'll hear a recitation of a prayer or a blessing and it will touch the right

button, and I'm actually suffused with a feeling of something outside of me. Mostly though, it's a feeling of connection; it's a connection with my past, it's a connection with history, with all those people that have come before me. It's not a religious matter. I still am curious, and I still would like to know what people do when they pray to God. I have no real understanding of that. You know, in bad times I think I've actually said, "Whoever you are, come on, break down and help me, give me a break." But that's the kind of thing you do when you are really at wit's end, when things are bad.

Here we sit, and you can see from the window that really very handsome church, and very often I've watched people going in, as I've gone into many, many churches. I think I've visited as many cathedrals all over the world as most people who've done the kind of traveling and work that I do have visited, but every now and then I wonder, "Well now, what is it? How do they do this, and what is the connection that they're making?" And I don't really get it. I think that I've probably missed something very important. I've spent so much time with the material, intellectual, spiritual *things* that religion has produced—everything from great architecture, to music, to paintings—and I can appreciate those things up to the point where I can make a bridge to the religious, spiritual spark that produced it. All these things that have been done for the glory of God have been vital aspects of my life, but the *meaning* of God is something that I still wonder about. I said this once to a man

who was an Episcopalian priest, and he said to me, "You're working too hard at it. You've got the answer; it's that wonder itself which is the prime mover. Don't belabor it so." So I said, "I'd be happy to accept that answer if I didn't know about the miles and miles of shelves of philosophical and religious tracts that exist, a tiny thimbleful of which I've dipped into, which try to explain that wonder. He couldn't tell me to just accept it like that when I knew about this long history of people who expressed the wonder but then realized that the mind wasn't satisfied that way. I don't know. It is a question that I think about often.

So back to the family, and were they observant: Now I've told you about my grandmother, I've told you about my father and mother, who sort of followed the forms, but when it wasn't convenient, or if somebody wasn't watching, they didn't. They did what they thought was necessary for me and my sister and themselves. On the Jewish high holidays it would have been unimaginable to keep the store open, but that's true even today for a lot of people who in no other way express their religion. Is that a matter of faith? I don't know, I think it's just a matter of practice, of habit; it's a cultural phenomenon. So that's my mother and father, and they never pushed me in that direction.

SMITH: What were your family's ambitions for you?

EDELSTEIN: Can I just say one more thing about religion and then I'll come back to that?

SMITH: Oh, certainly.

EDELSTEIN: I mentioned my grandmother, who was religious in a conventional sense; she observed everything. I think if she had any ambition it was to find out that there was an observance that she hadn't previously known about so she could take it up. For a young person, especially one getting into adolescence, this could be a little bit of a problem, but she was such a marvelous woman and she was so loving and so warm and giving that that was a minor thing. Now my grandfather was the interesting one, because he was observant but I suspect that there was a little bit of cynicism in his makeup. Here he was, a poor man, running this corner store—chewing gum and cigarettes and an odd sandwich, a cold bottle . . . pennies. But he was the pillar of the synagogue, as it were. He was always dressed in a black suit and a derby hat, and the members of the congregation would come around and sit around my grandmother's table and talk long into the night: politics, social questions, religious questions, questions about the synagogue.

My grandfather was always at the head of the table, and he was observant. He smoked like a fiend, he had a beard, he was very handsome. His beard was not long, it was trimmed, rounded, but it was filthy because it was streaked with tobacco stains, and his teeth were falling out because they were rotted with tobacco. Of course children would be fascinated with these yellow, horrible ugly streaks of tobacco that stained his beard. He didn't smoke on the Sabbath. But he had a different side of his

life, and it was the side which was extraordinarily influential on me. He was a sort of amateur historian. He believed that it was not right to live in a place if you didn't know about it. We had a ritual for a long time during my childhood. Every Saturday afternoon, after going to the synagogue, we would have a walk. Not *just* a walk; it was a real hike, because he would walk everywhere through this part of the city.

This section of Baltimore was not only a rich, vibrant Jewish, Italian, and black ghetto, where all these lives impinged on one another, plus the lumber yard and the coal yard and all that, but we were also walking distance from the harbor. I don't know if you know Baltimore, but in those days there was a real harbor. There is this inner harbor now, which is just another theme park like so much of American cities have become today, with the same shops that you see everywhere, the same boutiques, the same food and all of that, but when I was a boy that harbor was a dream. It came, as the inner harbor still does, right smack up into the center of the city, a block from the city hall. Big boats came up from the Caribbean with fruit, bananas and watermelons, and there were the stevedores with their wonderful litanies and cries. You know, those marvelous cries have been collected; there's a lot of literature about it. There were boats filled with oysters and crabs, which of course were forbidden to us, but they were so colorful.

My grandfather always had his walking stick. He had a whole array of these walking sticks. He was very elegant too, like my father. They had a lot in common in

that way, although my grandfather certainly had a disreputable look because there was always cigarette ash on his beard; his beard was covered with it. But he was always spiffed up in the sense that he had a proper suit on and he had this black derby and these wax stiff collars, high ones. I never saw my father or my grandfather without their shoes absolutely sparkling. So we'd walk, and my grandfather would light his cigarette and say, "Okay, now, who lived in that house?" And then I'd have to remember: "Well, that was where Francis Scott Key lived." And then, "Who lived in that house?" And I would say, "That was where [Edgar] Allan Poe was born." All of the Poe family lived in that neighborhood. My grandfather knew every house, and he knew everybody, and as we walked people would greet him. Then we'd get along the harbor, and there was the McCormick Tea and Spice Company, which still exists; it's very big, and they still distribute tea and spice, although they've probably been taken over by A & P or who knows what today. But that entire area always smelled of spices, and the boats would come up and unload, and it was just absolutely heaven. My grandfather knew all of these people, and they all knew me. It was a fantastic education, absolutely fantastic.

So my grandfather sort of straggled two worlds. He would do some of his share in the store, but he left it, really, all to my grandmother. She did everything; she ran the house, she ran the store. My grandfather would fall back on what had been the traditional role of the Jewish scholar. The holy thing to do was to be a scholar, to

study the Torah, because it's in the Torah that all the lessons of life and the laws that are to be obeyed are contained. It is through the study of Torah that the good Jew achieves his fulfillment and obeys God's command. So that's supposedly what he was doing. But he was really dreaming his dreams, and pretending, and talking. People were coming around, and there was a lot of talk. If it wasn't these black guys coming down covered with coal dust and sawdust, there were his compatriots talking about what was happening in Palestine then, or in Europe, in Germany, or in the States—what Roosevelt was going to do next—or talking about religious questions.

My grandfather was very stern with me. I was very highly disciplined, and we were very close. That first year, when I actually lived there, I slept in the same bed with him, but it wasn't very comfortable. He probably was just as uncomfortable as I was. I don't know how long that lasted, but I have a memory of a big feather bed and my grandfather, but then finally I got my own bed. The rooms above the store were not heated, so I think maybe I slept with my grandfather for warmth. I think that's very likely. The toilet was outside, so it was hard, but I don't have a memory or a feeling of deprivation, because there was so much activity and so much warmth of another kind. There were all these men, and a constant stream of people talking.

I haven't forgotten your question. You wanted to know about their expectations for me and you wanted to know about Zionism. It's sort of interrelated, because the talk always continued in my mother and father's household. My father

was not a great talker but my mother was, and I guess she sort of continued what had been a lifestyle that she had learned in her father and mother's house. There was always somebody in the kitchen, in back of the store or above the store, as it happened to be, and my mother was a wonderful cook. She never ate but she cooked. [laughter] The number of times that my mother sat down at the table, in my memory, were very, very few. If she sat down at the table to take part in the meal that she had made, she was always jumping up and down constantly. The table and the stove were adjacent; there was no such thing as a dining room—not in our house, anyway.

Even in the worst of times there were people coming in. My grandparents and my parents were embodiments of charity. There was always something for somebody who needed it. And these were, believe me, really very bad times. You've heard this before from many people, I'm sure. There were always people who were there for a meal. Of course there were occasions when it was just the family, but it seemed like at every meal—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—there was always a stranger or a relative, or somebody from the old country, or somebody passing through, at the table. And with that there was talk.

On Sunday afternoons we went to the house of our cousins, Etta and David Fishman. Etta was my mother's first cousin, the daughter of my grandmother's sister. My family and these people were very close, and they were a very important influence

on me. I think about them all the time. There were other families that were part of this circle, but these people were the closest. They were the center of the circle. They were extremely interesting. They left Europe, but instead of coming directly to America they went to Palestine. I should say, just in passing, although it's not a passing subject, that my mother's family was very severely affected by what in short terminology we call the Holocaust. They lost lots of people to concentration camps and one kind of massacre or another. Both my father and mother were born in Europe. My father was born in Odessa, and my mother in this tiny village of Mlniv, in that shifting boundary land between Russia and Poland. Dave Fishman and one of my grandmother's brothers went to Palestine, and then they came to America. In Palestine they lived on a kibbutz. It was a hard, pioneering, rough and at the same time very romantic life. But they also acquired a highly intellectual life.

We went to the Fishman's house *every* Sunday afternoon for years. There were times when I was quite rebellious about this; I wanted to do other things, or I wanted to be alone or whatever. But no, it was a family thing, and we went. I spent so much time in that house that sometimes I didn't know where I belonged. We'd sit around their kitchen, and sometimes I was bored stiff. Sometimes I didn't understand it, and even if I did understand it I was bored. But I know now how wide-ranging, and occasionally deep and rich this talk was, about everything under the sun. Mostly it was politics. By politics I mean true politics, and the social and economic situation

in Europe. Dave and Etta Fishman, particularly Dave, were much better educated, in the strict sense of the word—they had more schooling—than my mother and father, and they were readers to a greater extent than my mother and father. Dave had a menial job in a bakery in Baltimore. He did this type of work all his life, but out of choice, because that left him time to do other things. He didn't have to worry about keeping the store open and all these other things. People were always after him to do something else, because it was sort of a low-class job, but it was fine with him. They had two daughters.

Dave moonlighted as a Hebrew teacher, and it was with him that I supposedly was studying modern Hebrew, because having spent years in Palestine, he spoke and read Hebrew very well. Every now and then there would be some visitor from Palestine—it was not Israel until 1948—and the discussion would be in Hebrew. But most of the discussions of course were in English, or an extraordinary combination. I grew up speaking English and Yiddish in my grandfather's house. When we were in the house we spoke Yiddish, because that was my grandmother's language. When we were outside the house we spoke English, because half the time there was a third party—one of the passers-by, or boat owners or whatever—who we would be talking to. In my own home we spoke English, but when my mother and father were in my grandparent's house they spoke Yiddish.

My father, and it's something that I'm very happy to have inherited from him,

had a great gift for languages. Also, I think he just had that kind of ear; he was more a mimic than a linguist, and I'm probably more of a mimic than a linguist. But he was always interested in learning languages, and when he was something like eighty years old he started to study Russian, and he did very well. My mother had died and he lived with a group of people who were Russian. He felt that he couldn't communicate or understand, so he studied Russian, and when he died at eighty-nine he was speaking Russian very well.

So, back to the Fishmans and Zionism. I spent an awful long time in that house. I was perforce a Zionist. I think I was a Zionist even before I knew what it meant. I am less of a Zionist now, but I was a Zionist then because it was part of everything that was familiar. Dave Fishman was not your run-of-the-mill Zionist; he was an activist. I mean he was for shooting everybody that got in the way, and there were no actions that he considered reprehensible or even impossible. He would do whatever was necessary to establish this Jewish state. So this was part of my life; I didn't know that there was anything else. I think it accounts for very troubled feelings that I have about Israel and Israeli politics and the future, because one part of me understands and believes in the state of Israel and the need for it, and I know in factual terms how it came about and why it came about and so on. I not only absorbed it from the family, but I read an enormous body of literature till I was blue in the face. But there are other issues of course that I know about today and feel

strongly about today. I'm totally opposed to anything that has a violent component—everything from the death penalty to war.

[Tape II, Side One]

SMITH: Did your family think about emigrating to Palestine?

EDELSTEIN: No, no.

SMITH: Of course they were very concerned about what was going on in Germany. Were there efforts to get family out of there?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, yes. There was a lot of talk about that. Some were gotten out and some were not.

SMITH: I know from other people I've interviewed that in Germany, particularly amongst the men, there was even resistance to leaving.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, and then the war came and that was it. That's another big part of the story which we'll get to. But as for my family's expectations for me, that was very clear from the beginning. I think this was something which was pervasive in that culture and that society, and it's a story that has been told many, many times, over and over again. There was never any question in their mind, there was never any question in my mind; it was a settled thing. I was going to be what was referred to as a "professional man." That was it. Unlike some other people, it never was a problem for me, because that was my ambition too. Now, the fact that there were these parallel ambitions was good, I suppose, but maybe not so good. Maybe my life would

have been different, more adventurous, even more creative if I had been a more rebellious type and had chosen paths of my own rather than conforming to what we now know as quite a common pattern. Nevertheless, there was only one really important life and that was the scholarly life. Whether or not I was going to be a lawyer or a doctor or a professor or a this or a that never was the issue. Was I going to be one, or all of those things?—the more the better of course.

Not only was I the male child, but I was the oldest. My sister, as I said, came five years later. In addition to the fact that she was a girl, she was a sickly child, so she suffered because the family did not have the same ambitions for her. It was all laid on me; I was going to be this great figure—which was easy enough for them to foresee, because I was, from day one practically, the embodiment of just what they wanted. When was I happiest? I was happiest with a book in front of me, listening to music, going to a museum, observing nature, walking with my grandfather and talking about history, finding about who built what, when, and why. All of these things couldn't have delighted them more. I spent time in libraries, I spent time with my own books. I was perfect. And I was an obedient child, not a rebellious one. I'm sure I had my moments, but for the most part I was the answer to their prayers. So everything was done for me, and I probably was terribly, terribly spoiled. I didn't realize it then. I thought this was the way it ought to be. Everything was made as easy as possible for me. Some people would even have said that in some ways I was

neglected because so much was taken for granted. Here I was, a good child, a good boy, with my nose in a book. I didn't make trouble, so people left me alone instead of challenging me. I think there's something to this. Certainly later in life I think I would have developed differently if I had been encouraged to move out of this pattern, but I wasn't. I'm thinking particularly about when I was older, in my teens, and it was time to go to college. It never occurred to anybody that I would leave home.

SMITH: No?

EDELSTEIN: No. It was only later, when a lot of things had happened to me, that I thought about why I stayed there. I had top marks in high school and I had a full scholarship. I stayed in Baltimore and went to Johns Hopkins, where they treated me beautifully. I had fantastic experiences which I wouldn't have traded for the world, but I might have had fantastic experiences elsewhere too. You can't relive your life, but it's certainly not unnatural to wonder and ask these questions. At the time it never occurred to me. Interestingly enough, it never occurred to anybody else either. It certainly never occurred to my parents, but also, interestingly enough, it did not occur to the scores of bright, observant, and interested adults with whom I came in contact—my teachers and counselors, and so on. Very strange that nobody said, "Well, you've got this full scholarship to Johns Hopkins but with your grades you could go anywhere. Why don't you go to Harvard?" Nobody ever put it to me, and I

find that strange now.

So these were their ambitions. I was going to be a scholar or a professional person of some kind. I ran through the gamut of things I wanted to do. I met one of the great archaeologists of all time, William Foxwell Albright, who taught at Johns Hopkins, and he took kindly to me, an undergraduate—I think I was a freshman—so I was going to be an archaeologist. Everything from A to Z. If I met interesting teachers, and I met many who inspired me, I was lucky, I would decide to be whatever they were—a poet, a musician, or a doctor, and so on. This is an attitude, actually, that has not left me. Every now and then I make a joke, which now of course is a poor joke, that I'm going to do this or that when I grow up. I'd better hurry up.

SMITH: You were raised in a very rich culture, and then you went to the public schools. Was that an extension of your family life, or was there some conflict there, or difference?

EDELSTEIN: No conflict at all. There were private schools that I was aware of, but the kids who went to those schools came from a different class. I suppose if my family had wanted to pursue this I probably could have gotten some kind of scholarship—they didn't have enough money to send me—but I don't think it occurred to them. It didn't really have to occur to them, because, as I'm sure you know, the public schools that I went to were not the public schools of today. I went

to fantastic schools. In those days, everybody had the most marvelous education, and my mother was always interested and aware and watching what might happen. When I was in elementary school, I did something naughty, and the teacher had a ruler with a metal edge.

SMITH: Oh, a ferrule.

EDELSTEIN: She made you put your hand on the desk and she'd [strike your hand] with the metal edge, so your knuckles were cut and bleeding. I came home for lunch and my mother saw this. She marched back to the school with me and caused such a fuss. I remember that I was so proud of my mother and I was terrified of what would happen. The teacher disappeared, and I thought, "My mother did this!" The teacher was a horrible woman and what she did was really cruel, because my knuckles *were* bleeding. She'd take this ruler, and . . . swoosh!

So, as I said, there were the financial reasons for not sending me to a private school, but beyond that, it just didn't occur to them. One, I was studious, diligent, and motivated. I did well in school. And two, the school did very well by me.

SMITH: What languages did you take in high school?

EDELSTEIN: Lots. I studied French, German, Italian, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. And then there was Yiddish always in the background. We moved around quite a bit, because one business or another of my father's would fail. There was a time when we had to move in with one of the Fishmans—not Etta and Dave Fishman, but another

member of that family. We had to move in with them because I guess we couldn't keep up the house or something. Things were tumultuous in those years, but I never felt deprived, and I was never hungry. There was always, as I said, food enough for others. It was only when we lived in other people's houses that I was aware that there wasn't enough sometimes.

I remember one time being very, very disturbed and hurt. I was in tears. Things were bad, and we went to live with Etta Fishman's sister, Ida, and she made the most delicious green pea soup. She had served us at the table and I finished the bowl before anybody else had even begun. I asked for more, and it was right out of Dickens. [laughter] You know: "How could you ask that?" Well, I felt terrible, and obviously I remember it. I remember going to Etta Fishman's house and having lunch with their girls, Selma and Irene. I noticed when Mrs. Fishman gave me my sandwich she didn't put a whole piece of cheese or meat in it like my mother did; she would tear the meat or cheese up in little pieces so there would be enough to go around. Things like that made an impression on me, and I noticed that. But in my house there was always plenty for me and my sister, and there was always enough for other people. There was always somebody.

There was an uncle who had come for breakfast. I can recall watching this man; I never saw anybody eat so much. I guess maybe that was his only meal that day, I don't know. It was always breakfast. Then there was this terribly overweight

lady, who wasn't even a relative, but she came from the same village. There's a wonderful word for that, a *Landsmann*, a *Landsleid*, and she was part of the village, the shtetl. She always came for tea. She always had to have another glass of tea "to wash it down," because she was eating all this stuff. That was her phrase. It was the first time that I ever heard that phrase, and it has stuck with me. I thought she was sort of gross because she ate so much and she was fat to begin with. I didn't like her, but my mother did. My mother said, "She's hungry. She's a person." and she came from the village, and so on, and you have to feed people.

I don't know how we got on to that, but let me go back to my high school experience. I don't know any word for it other than . . . wonderful, inspiring. I went to what is known as the Baltimore City College, which still exists. It was founded in the early part of the nineteenth century, when there was this great movement in American public education. Boston Latin, which also still exists, was the first school to come out of this movement; it was really the equivalent of the *Gymnasium*. I can't remember now whether Baltimore City College was the second or third, but anyway, there was something magical about that school. I think, in many ways, in terms of consciousness, being aware of what was going on, my high school days were the most pleasurable. One of the reasons was that the school was far away from the dismal neighborhood in which I lived, above the store.

At that time we lived down on Washington Boulevard. Not much of it is left

now, what with freeways and highways and one thing or another. Martin Luther King Highway has bisected that area. But then it was at the edge of the city, in the business section. The kitchen was behind the store. Above were two rooms and a bathroom, and on the third floor were two rooms, one of which was a storage room, and the other was my bedroom. My sister had a bedroom on the second floor, my mother and father's bedroom was there, and the bathroom. I had a chamber pot in my room so that I wouldn't have to disturb my parents at night, because you had to go through their bedroom to get to the bathroom.

In order to get to Baltimore City College I had to get on a trolley, and then I had to transfer in a section which I loved, filled with marvelous late nineteenth century stone, marble and brick houses of the well-to-do and the upper classes. Cities, architecture, urban life have been and are very important to me. I thrive on these things, in some ways. So I transferred on Charles Street, just above Mount Vernon Place. At that point my life changed and I was a different person, because from there to Baltimore City College, which was like a gothic cathedral sitting on a high green hill, where all you saw were grass and flowers and bushes and plants and trees. In the distance you saw houses, and Eastern High School, the girls' school—Baltimore City College was just for boys—and then Babe Ruth Stadium, a marvelous ball park, which has been supplanted by the Camden Yard station. Baseball is a passion of mine, partly because I grew up where there was a *real* ball

park, with *real* grass. The games were only played in the day time, and the Baltimore Orioles were a marvelous team. It was Babe Ruth's city, where he was born. So Baltimore City College was a beautiful gothic building on this high hill, and it had wide halls and good study rooms and class rooms, a library that you could get lost in, a swimming pool, and clubs of all kinds to join: the history club, the Latin club, and a school newspaper. And the teachers knew something and loved their work. They could inspire the kids.

When I didn't go to school, I walked the city. On the weekends I walked from my house to the Lyric Theater, where there were musical and theatrical productions. The theater was opposite Mount Royal Station, another place that I loved. Now it's a museum devoted to trains and various other things. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad doesn't exist anymore. Then I'd walk all the way up to the Baltimore Museum of Art. I'd walk to the Walters Art Gallery, which is in Mount Vernon Place, and I'd walk to the Peabody Institute Library. Or I might just walk to Mount Vernon Place and sit on the stone benches, looking at the sculpture, the bronzes, and the marble. I'd go to Grace Episcopal Church because it had and still has one of the great organs in America. I wouldn't tell my mother and father about that because they would think that that was not right. I didn't tell my mother and father about most of these things. They didn't ask and I didn't tell them. I didn't think they'd understand and I was sort of growing away from them at that point. I thought all this was better than my life at

home. It was cleaner. All of these people looked more dignified, grander, richer; they had traditions. I had traditions of course, but they had better traditions.

Mostly I walked to the Enoch Pratt Free Library. It is my unshakable conviction that one of the glorious achievements of this country was the creation of the free public library. There are many people who have said the same thing. Alfred Kazin wrote a book about himself called *A Walker in the City*, and that's what I was. You know, all through life one sees and is aware of things that speak to you very strongly, and I never had and never will have Alfred Kazin's abilities as a thinker, as a critic, and certainly not as a writer, but I saw this book and realized that this book was as much about me as it was about him—everything from the title to the specific experiences. In those days the Enoch Pratt was one of the great libraries in America. It was across the street from the Baltimore cathedral, the Bullfinch building, with its wonderful, shiny dome. This was the old WASP territory of the city . . . marvelous shops and shop windows, and great houses. It was a different way of life, you know, where families as a whole sat down to eat. Mother wasn't always at the stove, and conversations were of a different sort.

It was a period of discovering oneself, but one might also say I was separating myself from my family and from my background. You know, it all comes back, you make a circle again, but I guess that's what one does in those years, in adolescence, and it's an everyday experience. My real life was as a walker in the city. I always

enjoyed walking to the Baltimore Museum of Art more than whatever I did inside the Baltimore Museum of Art. The experience of going to the museum was a more fulfilling one than what happened inside, although many great things happened inside that museum and other museums, and it was particularly true of the Walters Art Gallery. So the city, the school, and the libraries were really important. On top of everything that happened to me before, those were the really formative things.

SMITH: Were your closest friends in your community, or at the high school?

EDELSTEIN: At school. I had a couple of close friends in the community, but my life was really outside. There was a guy who lived next door whose father had a jewelry store. We did some things together, but he wasn't interested in the kinds of things I was interested in. There was another fellow who lived not far away whose father was also in business or something. Allen Oppenheimer was his name. We played tennis. In those days I played a lot of tennis. I was not terribly athletic. I think I was a kind of roly-poly type. I was never fat, but I was roly-poly—not an athletic sort. But I liked tennis and I was pretty good at it, actually. There were some public courts where you could play at night, so Allen and I used to do that, but I was really a loner. I used to go on these long, long walks. I'm talking about, well, six or seven miles each way. I'd go for walks in the country too, but not so much; it was the city that really interested me. Every now and then I'd go out into the country because where we lived, Washington Boulevard, was sort of the edge of the city.

Now it's much absorbed. I knew very little about country life. I'd explore the Patapsco River and wander around. It was dangerous. I used to be afraid because everybody would tell me about the stuff you sink into.

SMITH: Oh, quicksand?

EDELSTEIN: Quicksand. I doubt that it was truly quicksand, but it was obviously very marshy, and you could probably sink in to your knees or maybe even your waist, I don't know, but that always gave a little edge of excitement to it. And then there was, and there still is, a marvelous city park in Baltimore called Druid Hill Park. It's one of the great city parks. I'd walk to the harbor and relive the times that I went with my grandfather.

Around Mount Vernon Place there was the Walters, the Peabody, the Enoch Pratt, fantastic houses, and there was the Peabody Bookshop. The Peabody Bookshop was a real institution. A German guy came over, a German Jew, I suppose, although I never thought about it, and he opened up a bookshop one block above Mount Vernon Place. It was one of those secondhand bookshops that were so prevalent in America. There were lots of bookshops in Baltimore: Howard Street, Franklin Street, Charles Street. I didn't know anything about rare books and the antiquarian book trade and all of this stuff in those days. All I knew was there were books in these places and you could buy them for a nickel, or a quarter—although a quarter was a lot of money in those days. I always had a little bit of money in my

pocket. I got an allowance. I had had odd jobs, although I never really worked the way other kids worked. As I said, I think I was spoiled; much too much was given to me. I did from time to time have an odd job, but it wasn't really till I got to college that I worked.

The Peabody Bookshop was street level, and outside there were barrels of books. You'd go down a couple of steps, and there was a long room. Siegfried Weissberger would be sitting on a high stool behind a long table, smoking a big pipe, glasses, sort of grumpy. He had an upstairs which was so dirty; you had to snake your way through tons and tons of books. I don't think I ever found anything, but it was heaven, absolute heaven. But then, heaven plus, you went through the bookstore and behind it was a real German *Bierstube*. Now, Baltimore was a very German city. It still has a large German population, but that population is small now compared to the other ethnic groups that have moved in. In that *Bierstube* there was nothing but a wooden floor, wooden tables, wooden wall, and beer. Well, I was young, underage, but I knew that the literati and the intelligentsia from Johns Hopkins were there, and Henry [H. L.] Mencken would be there constantly; I saw him umpteen times. Everybody who was anybody I thought worth seeing was there. But I couldn't go in.

When I was about fourteen years old, around the corner from our store/house on Washington Boulevard was a branch library. May Carnegie's soul rest in peace; whatever else he was, he was a genius for his idea of building these libraries. Even as

much as I loved the main branch, which was one of the great libraries of the United States, I practically lived at this branch around the corner, and a lot of very important things happened to me there. There was a librarian, and her name was Mrs. Melvin. Of course I thought this was wonderful because my middle name is Melvin. My full name is Jerome Melvin.

[Tape II, Side Two]

SMITH: You were talking about the *Bierstube*.

EDELSTEIN: I was talking about the *Bierstube* and I was going to talk about Mrs. Melvin, because they're related. Well, I would hear about these fantastic conversations that were going on in the *Bierstube*, and all these people, and it was my ambition to live there. There was this library where I spent lots of time reading, or just dreaming. An awful lot of dreaming goes on in libraries, you know. People just sit, and I think it's wonderful. The librarian, Mrs. Melvin, was a small woman with dark hair. I have the sense of somebody sort of petite and pretty, who took an interest in me. I remember the first time that I was conscious of her as a person. I said something and she corrected my grammar. I was so embarrassed, so ashamed. I know that my face must have become beet red. She said something like, "You're a smart kid, you shouldn't say things like that." I don't remember what it was, but she corrected me. She must have done this with lots of kids. Whenever I walked in she'd ask me what I thought about the books I was returning and she would suggest that I

read something else. I guess I had a crush on her.

One day, she said, "My husband and I," or maybe it was, "My boyfriend and I are going to the Peabody Bookshop tonight. Will you ask your mother and father if it's okay if you can come with us?" In those days you said that to fourteen year olds. I was floating. I had permission, but I would have gone with them even without permission, probably. I would have lied about it, but I didn't have to. So I went. There was a piano in there, and this fat, bald-headed guy was plonking out these ersatz German songs, and people sang, if they'd had enough beer. It was a smoky, thick atmosphere. I was served a Coca-Cola ,or whatever was being served in those times to kids, and at one point Mrs Melvin said, "Would you like to have some beer?" I had had alcohol on religious ceremonial occasions. I had to sip wine, and I may have even sipped beer, because my father liked to have beer, but this was really my *first* beer, you know. This was at a table in the Peabody Bookshop, and it was different. I was just astonished. I thought at any minute the cops were going to come in and raid the place. Mrs Melvin said, "It's okay; it will be all right." Well, she was just the first of a whole array of people who somehow or another were in that path that I was taking. Librarians and teachers. There were librarians in the Enoch Pratt who were kind, thoughtful, observant, and generous. And they taught. They were the embodiment of Chaucer's teacher, the person who gladly learns and gladly teaches. It's as if they were just waiting there for this sponge-like kid to come up and

ask them a question.

But even better were the teachers, in the sense of it being their profession, in high school. There were three of them, in particular. One was the principal of Baltimore City College, who taught Latin. He was Mr. Chips in person. As it turned out, he actually looked like the movie version of Mr. Chips. He really did. He always wore a three-piece, gray, mottled wool suit. He was tall, well over six feet, thin, with white hair, and he had these round, rimless glasses, and really icy blue eyes, except that he was a warm person. When he looked at you, you wanted to come to attention; you knew that he was expecting the best. I've been trying to think of his name for some time and I can't. He had a Ph.D., and he taught homilies. I suppose, if one wanted to analyze it, everything he said was probably a platitude. Every sentence was a quotation from Cicero or Ovid or Catullus or Homer, or whatever. I'm sure, if you'd had to listen to this kind of thing now, you'd say, "Come on, get off of it. Say something real." But they were pearls, and I swallowed every one. He was inspiring. I wanted nothing more than to impress this man and please him, and how could I do that except by learning my lessons and getting hundreds on the tests? I studied four years of Latin and two years of Greek. It was heaven.

Then there were two other men. One was Dr. Templeman, who also taught Latin. Now, Templeman was a very different sort from "Mr. Chips"; he was very romantic. He moved me immeasurably because I will never forget his stories of

being in a foxhole in the First World War, with the bullets going by, and surviving this by reciting poetry to himself. Of course he knew all of Homer and Virgil by heart. I carried this [admiration] to such an extreme that when I went into the army in 1943, what I carried with me was a paperback copy of [Francis Turner] Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, which I still have. It is in absolute tatters, but I still have it. It was with me all the time. I never memorized it the way Templeman had memorized Virgil and Homer, but I read it constantly, and it was wonderful.

Templeman used to have us students to his house, and where did he live but in an apartment around the corner from Mount Vernon Place, a block up from the Enoch Pratt Free Library on Cathedral Street. We'd go there, and he always had music on the turntable. He would say, "What would you like to hear?" And I would say, "Oh, anything would be all right, whatever you've got there." Then he'd say, "Suppose I play some Dvořák?" I would say at that point, "I don't know that piece," and he would tell me I was going to know it, because it was incomparable and it was something one must know. So he played it, I listened, and I loved it, and ever since, it's something I must have played hundreds and hundreds of times. Mr. Templeman was very English in his manner and in his appearance. He looked like T. S. Eliot: slicked back hair and a sort of pale, gray complexion. He wasn't very well, Templeman, and he died soon after. Actually, he was wounded during the First World War, and whatever it was caught up with him.

So we listened to music, and he'd give us sherry, which I'd never had before. Sometimes it would just be myself, and sometimes there would be several of us. For me this was the height of civilization. I mean civilization in every sense of the word: not just learning and that sort of thing but of *being* civilized. He just had an ordinary apartment, of course, but to me it was you know. . . ah! He had lovely things, books everywhere of course, and nice furniture, and we had sherry in these crystal glasses. I was absolutely inspired.

There was a third teacher whose name was John Pentz—my English teacher. He was sort of a round man, short, who loved English literature, poetry, and Shakespeare in particular, and he loved to teach. When I was in his class, listening to him recite Shakespeare, and talking about it and what it meant, I was in seventh heaven. He was wonderful. There were times when I could recite all of Macbeth. I can't do that anymore, although I can recite long passages. It was a sort of pedagogy that doesn't exist anymore, which is too bad I think. One learned not only to read poetry but to say it, and the exercise of memory played a very, very big part in education, a loss which I think is terrible today, because our whole world is nothing but sound bites. You can't get anybody to read a book, much less memorize a few lines. So I think we've lost a great deal in that respect.

I'm very interested in the history of reading. I think about the history of reading as an extension of the memory. If you think about how people first read, they

didn't; they were read to. And then even before that, they told stories to one another. Do you know that in certain cultures the mind was so attuned that it was possible for people to sit around the fire and hear a ballad or a tale once, and they could remember thousands of lines? Of course they repeated it soon after and repeated it continually. But this is really amazing. Well, this is off the subject.

SMITH: But it points in a direction. Did you have teachers at Johns Hopkins that you were as close to?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, oh yes. I left Baltimore City College, and I went immediately to Johns Hopkins. I want to tell you just one anecdote about my school days before getting to college, because it made a big difference in my life. I don't say this in terms of crediting myself with anything; it was just the way of the world then. There was another fellow, whose name was coincidentally also Melvin, and he and I were rivals in the school. We were never friends. We knew each other, we were friendly, but we were rivals in the sense of who was going to get the highest grade average—everything was grades of course. You could get one hundred, but nobody ever got that. Actually, Mel was a year ahead of me, and my idea was to better his record. I didn't, but he graduated with a 99.9 average from the Baltimore City College, and it made the newspapers and everything. My ambition was to do as well, if not better. I didn't. I got 99 point something. Not bad. I had heard that Mel was studying Italian, because he'd gotten interested in this guy called Dante something or other. Since he

was studying Italian, I figured I would too. I began to look into Italian and I found that I loved it. This is by way of getting into the subject of college.

So high school ended, and the war was already on, and everything was accelerated. Schools and colleges went full time. I had this scholarship, and I knew of course that I would be drafted at some point, so I wanted to get in as much college as possible. I tried not to get drafted, but I thought that it probably would happen, as it did. So I went to college immediately after high school—the next Monday, or whatever. Now, Johns Hopkins was, and to some extent still is, a great, unusual university. It was small, and it had a fantastic reputation. It was started in the late nineteenth century by people like Josiah Royce, the great philosopher, and Daniel Coit Gilman, who had gone over to Germany to study the German system. Everything was a seminar system. There was a main library, but every department had its own library. It was primarily a graduate school with this appendage of an undergraduate program, but in reality there was very little distinction.

I arrived on campus, it was wartime, and it was relatively unpopulated. Of course I had hung around the university quite a lot before, checking out this place where I knew I was going to spend so much of my time; as a matter of fact I thought I'd be there forever. My ambition was to go to Johns Hopkins, go to graduate school, and become a professor there. That was it. My horizon didn't really go beyond that, because a lot of the people that I respected and knew had done just that. When I

arrived on campus, the professorial staff was populated by the most illustrious group of men—and one woman—that you can imagine. Sidney Painter, the historian of chivalry, wrote fantastic books on English and French chivalry during the Middle Ages. Frederick Chapin Lane was the great historian of Italian economic history primarily, but he also wrote a book on Italian maritime history. Venetian history was his specialty. Charles [Southward] Singleton was the "single"—to make a bad pun—most important scholar of Italian and Dante studies in America at the time. And Harold F. Cherniss, the great historian of ancient Greek philosophy, was there, as well as Leo Spitzer, probably the world's leading historian of linguistics, and his side kick, Anna Hatcher, who was also a great linguistics scholar. Everybody would sort of whisper about them, because we thought she was his mistress. Leo Spitzer spoke every language under the sun. His ambition, he once told me, was to have an article in every learned journal that existed, and in every Western language. [laughter] Charles A. Barker and [C.] Vann Woodward, the American historians, were there, and Hans Tietze, the historian of modern German history, and William Foxwell Albright, whom I mentioned before. It was all mine—and the few others who were there.

At that time I had a crush on an older woman; she was five or six years older, and her name was Janet. She was one of these people from the old country, or her family was. She was interested in somebody else her own age, who was an historian

of mathematics, and he became very famous. His name was Abe [Abraham Joseph] Sachs. He came up here, quite coincidentally, to Brown University, to work with Otto Neugebauer, the preeminent historian of mathematics in this century. They studied Babylonian tablets. He was an archaeologist-cum-mathematician, and since Janet was interested in him I was going to outdo him in this field. So I went to William Foxwell Albright and I said I'd like to become an archaeologist. He said, "Okay, sit in on the seminar." It was some relatively elementary subject—the history of the Near East or something like that. I could see very quickly that that was not for me. I was not diligent enough for that.

Then I went to Harold Cherniss, this fantastic man, who died just recently. When he left Hopkins he became a member of the permanent cadre at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. First I went to the registrar and I said I want to study Greek; I'd been studying Greek in high school. He looked in the catalog and said, "There's no course in Greek scheduled, but why don't you go see Professor Cherniss? Maybe he can think up something for you." It was that kind of place. So I went to Cherniss. I can never forget him, a pudgy guy sitting in this smoke-filled room. He had this huge pipe; it used to make me sick. I decided the only way to overcome it was to smoke one myself. He never cleaned his pipe, so it was just awful, but you got used to it. He was sitting at the end of a long table, around which he would sometimes have seminars. That was his office. He sat me down and I said I want to

study Greek. He asked me why. I said I wanted to be able to read Homer. He asked me what Greek I knew. I said I had two years in high school and I didn't really know very much, and so on. He said, "All right, you can read Homer with me." I said, "Well, wait a minute, I'm not . . . " He said, "Do you want to study Homer or don't you?" I said I did, of course. He got up and went to his shelf. He asked me, "Do you have a Greek dictionary?" I said no. "Do you have a Greek grammar?" I said no. "Do you have a copy of Homer?" I said no. So he went and got a copy of Homer, a dictionary, and a grammar, and he gave them to me. He said we'd meet once a week, at such and such a time. "Here you are." I was to come back the following week, having read such and such lines. I said, "But I don't know how." He said, "This is the way we're going to do it." And that's the way we did it.

I went to Charles Singleton and said, "I'd like to enter your intermediate Italian class." He said, "Do you know Italian?" We became great, great friends. In later years, he'd left Hopkins to become a visiting professor at Harvard, and then he came back to Hopkins. He became the first chairman of the humanities program. there. For all his old-worldness, he had come from Missouri. He was a farmer. I have a photograph of him naked to the waist with a straw hat and blue jeans, sitting on top of his tractor. He had this big farm in Baldwin, Maryland. We became very good friends later and I was there when he died, which was really suicide because he didn't want to face this terrible cancer that he had. But he was actually cruel to me,

because I came to the first class and he looked up and he said, "Oh yeah, you're the one who thinks you know Italian." So he said something and I replied, and I used an archaic form of the word meaning "day." Today we would say *giorno* for "day, but in *La Bohème*, the word *di* was used for "day." Maybe I was showing off, because I used *di*, and he leaned forward, with everybody else tittering around the table, and said, "How do you know that word?" I said I knew that word because it was in *La Bohème*. I stayed in the class, and I guess I did all right. I don't remember much about it.

Charles Singleton was a great scholar, but he was a mystic. He did fantastic studies on Dante and the *Divina Commedia*, but he was a believer. Now of course, with a more critical eye and mind than I had in those days, I realize there are other ways to read Dante than simply the theological one, but for Charles Singleton this was the most important aspect of Dante. His *Divine Comedy* was a way to approach God. Like other rituals, you had to approach it step by step, the way Dante went through the circles of Hell and ascended into *Paradiso*. Beatrice and the virgin mother have a lot in common; the threads are many. Singleton gave a very famous seminar. It met once a week in the late afternoon, and it ended whenever it ended. People came from all over the world to attend it. It was always limited to a small number, so we could read and talk, and I got myself into it. It was one of the most fantastic intellectual experiences I've ever had in my life. It took two years. We

started with the *La Vita Nuova* in the first year, and the *Inferno*, and then the last year was the *Paradiso,* alone. We would sit, having read the assigned portion, and we would talk.

SMITH: You didn't do *Purgatorio*?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, *Purgatorio*, of course. You really had to be on the ball. Singleton was very demanding. I used to be a little disconcerted because every now and then he'd go off into a trance. I mean this literally. Sometimes it was kind of frightening. You know, his eyeballs would go up into his head. It seemed like it lasted forever, but it probably was just a minute or two, and then he'd come back to earth. But he was brilliant. He wasn't terribly interested in anything other than the mystical approaches to Dante. To read Dante purely as literature was anathema to him. To read Dante as social commentary was maybe forgivable, but he wasn't particularly interested. There were two approaches that were okay by him: one was the purely linguistic approach, and the other was a religious, mystical experience. It was one of the most fascinating and enriching things that I've ever done.

So I skirted and skipped around. I studied American history with Vann Woodward, Charlie Barker, and French medieval history with Painter, and Italian history with Lane. It was with Lane that I thought, "This is where my future lies." I decided to concentrate on Italian history, and I did, and then I was drafted. I was eighteen, and I went into the army, and that's another story. It's one o'clock.

SESSION TWO: 5 NOVEMBER, 1994

[Tape III, Side One]

SMITH: When we ended yesterday you were about to be drafted.

EDELSTEIN: I was eighteen, and I had been expecting it for quite a long time. I tried to get in as much as possible at the university. I went full steam, worked all the time, just as everybody else was doing, but that inevitable day came. It was winter or early spring, '43, and I was drafted, having undergone all the demeaning examinations and experiences that everyone else has described very well. There were the tearful good-byes from my family, and I went off with the usual feelings of trepidation and wonder and all that sort of thing. I didn't go very far at first because they sent me to Camp Mead, Maryland, where I waited around for a long time.

My experience in the army and the war was a mixture of things. It of course was war, and I had a lot of bad, unhappy experiences. I saw a lot of terrible things, but at the same time, as I look back now, with hindsight, it was a really liberating experience. I think this was true for many people. It was especially true for me because it took me away from the environment that I had always known through my first eighteen years. It really took me away for the first time in my life, and it opened up worlds. I suppose in many ways it changed my life, just as other kinds of experiences also changed my life. In any case, I spent a couple of months in Camp Mead. I was able to come home often, or my family came to see me I think more

often, because it was a very easy drive from Baltimore.

I was sent up to New York City to go to school. This was the first of a number of very fortuitous kinds of accidents in my army career. In typical army fashion I was supposed to learn how to be a cryptographer, and I thought that was going to be really fascinating, but it never got to that. At that time the army had an encampment of sorts at the old City College of New York. I guess there still is a CCNY, but it's not what it was then; it's become part of the City University of New York system now, with this sort of open enrollment that is the policy of the entire CUNY system. It's hardly the great university that it used to be. I'm sure you know about its history and the fantastic things which were done there in terms of teaching and learning. But it was also a function of the society that existed before the war and the children of immigrants who attended there.

In any case, it was a spectacular academic year. It was really extraordinary. All of us who were there were barracked in what had been an orphanage on Amsterdam Avenue way, way up there on 138th Street, between the main building of CCNY and the Hudson River. I slept in the top bunk of double bunks in this huge barrack-like hall; it was enormously long. But I was lucky because I had a bed which was close to the bathroom, which of course was twenty-five sinks in a row and twenty-five urinals in a row, that kind of thing. But I was quite comfortable, and I studied history and geography at CCNY. I remember there was a big emphasis on

geography, which has stood me in very good stead; it was wonderful. And more Italian, and what else? I can't remember the other courses; the history and geography courses stand out in my mind. So there I was for the academic year, studying at CCNY during part of the day, mostly just mornings. There was a minimum of army rules to obey: bunks had to be neat and there was the inspection of the bunks and the footlocker stood at the end of the bunk. Shoes had to be polished and there was roll call and so on, but it wasn't onerous. I didn't make too many friends at that point in that group, because everybody sort of went his own path, they all had different courses of study. But I remember one fellow, who was a Mormon. He was the first Mormon whom I had ever been in any real contact with, and I was fascinated by him and his stories. I think it was the first time he had ever been out of Mormon society, so he was equally interested in other people's lives, and we sort of went around together for a while.

Mostly I was alone, and I discovered New York. Now, in those days, you could go down to a place that was just for the soldiers who happened to be going through New York, and you could get free tickets to everything. You had to go down in the early afternoon, and you could get a ticket for that night's performance of the opera, a play, or a concert, or whatever was going on in New York, and there was a lot going on in New York during those years. Well, I went to everything. I was out every single night. I went to everything imaginable. Not only music and theater, but

exhibitions too, and I never paid for a thing. You were supposed to be in the barracks by a certain time, and I very seldom made it. You know, it's rather hilly up there around that part of New York, and rocky, as is all of Manhattan, and we had discovered a way of slipping around and under the fence. Somebody had cut a hole in it. So nobody was ever there and we always got in late. When you're that age you don't need much sleep.

I walked everywhere. There were many times when I walked from the theater section all the way up to 138th Street and thought nothing of it. In New York in those days you could walk anywhere. A lot of times I sat in Central Park at night, which of course would be suicidal today. There were girls, naturally, and we'd sit in Central Park together, and I discovered museums. In those days the block where the Museum of Modern Art is, on 53rd Street, between Fifth and Sixth, was not as developed as it is today; the block opposite MOMA was still brownstones, and I remember sitting on one of those brownstone's steps all night long, trying to make out probably with this girl, which didn't work because we spent the night sitting on the steps, talking. I remember that, but I don't remember a thing about her, so so much for her attractions. I can't remember what she looked like or her name or anything else about her, except that she was female. But there it was.

It was really exciting to have this entire city just at our feet, and it was a really great year. On top of which I learned a lot in academic terms. We were taught by the

regular faculty of CCNY, and there were students who had not been inducted and were not part of the army, so it was wonderful. One of the best things was the Loewinsohn Stadium. It no longer exists, but it was just below the main building of CCNY, and they had concerts at night in good weather. They stopped it because as airplane traffic grew heavier and heavier the racket of the planes destroyed any musical sound that was going on. I heard all kinds of music that I had never heard before. During that year I discovered musical operettas, which I still love very much. Of course they stopped Loewinsohn Stadium activities because, being wartime, there were blackouts and such things, so they couldn't have the concerts at night. But it was marvelous in the nice weather to sit out there in the open and listen to the music. I can remember sitting in the stands, and the concert would be interrupted periodically to announce once again the sinking of some ship by the Japanese in the Pacific, or the landing on some atoll or something like that. I don't know why they did that, but that was always happening during those concerts. So it was really a great year; it was exciting. And then that came to an end.

I don't think I finished the academic year, because . . . Boom! Overnight, the way things happen in the army, I was picked up and transported to Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky. Camp Breckinridge is on the Ohio River, and on the other side of the river is Evanston, Indiana. I was there at the camp for the better part of that summer, and I had the most astonishing experience. Camp Breckinridge was a

holding area, where you waited to be gathered together into various units and sent overseas. It's very beautiful there . . . rolling hills, very pleasant. I don't know if it's Kentucky blue-grass country, but it's sort of manicured countryside. And then there was Evanston for big-town entertainment, such as it was.

After a couple of days of the orientation that we had to go through, we were called out, and several of us, I included, were told that we were going to report to the motor pool, because we were going to learn how to drive various kinds of vehicles while we were waiting to be called up to form a new unit. We were various "loose ends," and they were going to form a new division. I was kind of pleased about this because I sort of envied the people that I saw who were drivers. They had a charmed life. They didn't have to report in all the time and they seemed to have a lot of free time, so I thought this was going to be great. So we went down to where the motor pool was to report to Sergeant so-and-so, and when it came my turn to say "here," it didn't come up. Everybody else was assigned to go here or go there, and I was left standing there. So I said, "You didn't call my name out." They asked me who I was and I told them. "Well, you're not on the list." I asked, "What am I supposed to do?" They told me to go back to the barracks where I came from and speak to the sergeant there. So I went back to the barracks and I spoke to the sergeant. He said, "Don't give me any of that stuff. You were supposed to go to the motor pool." Back to the motor pool.

Well, this went on for several days. I was lost, as far as the army was concerned, or at that particular moment. It didn't take me too long to figure out that this was ridiculous and I could make better use of my time. Now, there was a wonderful, low, one-story wooden building that had porches all around it and was rather attractive. It sat all by itself in a nice field, rather pretty, and there was a little stream running nearby. This was the library, and it was a very good library. In addition to being a library it was a music center, and they had tons and tons of records. So after shuttling back and forth between one sergeant and another, and being told, "We don't know who you are. Go back where you came from," I decided I would go to the library. This lasted for something like two months. Every morning the sergeant would say, "Go to the motor pool." I'd go out with the others, veer off to the library, and I'd spend the entire day there. The library was just one great big room, and there was never anybody else there. I read, I wrote tons of letters and postcards, and I listened to music. I can remember the first time I discovered Rachmaninov. Up until that time I had not known his music. I liked Romantic music very much, and Rachmaninov was certainly a Romantic. Now sometimes he bores me a little bit, but not always.

On weekends I'd go off and do other things. I remember getting sick on a roller coaster once. I threw up on everybody and everything. I don't know whether I'd eaten something, or I had too much too drink. It was sickening. Sometimes I'd

explore the countryside, or go to Evanston, and go to restaurants. I'd go with the other guys, and sometimes alone—I think more often alone than not. One time I went home. I had quite an experience, actually. I went home to Baltimore by train and on the way back to Camp Breckinridge a young woman with a baby got on the train. She sat next to me, and somewhere along the voyage she got up and said, "I'm just going to go to the bathroom, I'll be right back. Do you mind watching the baby?" I said, "No, go ahead." She never came back. We were near a stop, and I remember it was soon after we left the Baltimore station. She had abandoned the child; she got off wherever this next stop was. I was getting worried and I spoke to the other people around me, and nobody knew what had happened. I told the conductor, they stopped the train, the police came, and the MPs, and I was taken off the train. I said I had to get back or I was going to be AWOL and this was serious business, this was wartime. They said they knew all that, but this was also serious business. I was the last person to see this girl, and here's this baby. "Didn't she give you her name?" All this kind of stuff. I didn't know anything. So, anyway, it was quite an experience, I was up all night, and I was late. I took another train, and I had to go through the whole thing again with the top sergeant. They didn't punish me or anything, but it was a scary experience.

So I went back to my library and my music, and it was absolutely marvelous. It was a mild summer . . . Arcadian, and it was wonderful. But that ended very

abruptly, and the next thing I knew they had found my records, they knew who I was, and where I was supposed to be, and I was on a troop train going to Norfolk, Virginia, for embarkation. It was a sealed troop train. We went from Evanston, Indiana, all the way up to the Canadian border and around and way, way down south. They did that in those days because spies were watching the trains to see how many troops were getting ready to go to embarkation points. I was pleased because somehow or another we knew we were going to Norfolk, Virginia, and that meant we were not going to the Pacific. We thought we were going to Europe, and although the shooting was wilder there, it was not going to be as bad as the Pacific. And I was interested in Europe, but not the Pacific.

Finally we got to Norfolk, Virginia. We were there for a short while, maybe a week, while we were getting more processing, and then we were put on one of the many liberty ships, with the accompanying naval vessels. Everybody knew these terrible stories of ships being sunk, and we zig-zagged across the Atlantic for many, many days. I can't remember how long it took to cross the Atlantic, but because of this zig-zagging it was a long time. It was unpleasant living. There were stacks and stacks of bunks down in the holds, which were dismal and smelly and dark and crowded. Fortunately the weather was very good and mild, and you had to do guard duty. You had to stand out on the deck for four hours—four on and eight off—and watch for submarines and airplanes. Nothing happened. So it took a long time.

On that voyage I made friends with a guy who became one of my closest friends and remains so, though we don't see each other very much. He teaches at the University of Nebraska. He is half Italian, and his name is Raphael Zariski. I think he too is a historian . . . or no, he's interested more in political science. Raphael Zariski was the son of Oscar Zariski, who was a mathematician, I think, or a philosopher, or both. He taught for many years at Harvard and was big in probability theory and that sort of thing. Raphael's mother was Italian and her maiden name was Cagli. She was the sister of Corrado Cagli, a great artist I later discovered, who made a big name for himself and was very, very good. They came from a section of Italy which I later became very interested in in an academic way.

Raphael was born into this multilingual family, but at home they spoke Italian and English. Raphael and I managed to work it out so that we would have guard duty at night at the same time. So on this long voyage from Norfolk, Virginia, to Casablanca, we would stand out on the deck at night with nothing but the sea, dark sky, and the stars, and Raphael took it upon himself to teach me colloquial Italian. It was wonderful. As I say, we became good friends and we remain good friends to this day. Distance does its thing of course, and time does its thing, so we're not in close contact anymore, but I know he feels the same way about me that I do about him. When Eleanor and I were first married and lived in Cambridge, so did he, and we saw a lot of each other then.

After we arrived, I didn't see much of Casablanca or North Africa, because it was the war and this was just a staging area where we were going to get ready to go to Italy. It was camp life, muddy, tiresome, not very pleasant, with more processing and army rigmarole. I don't remember how long it was, maybe a week or ten days, something like that. I really didn't see anything, unfortunately. They put groups of us in open boats and we crossed the Mediterranean. There were twelve or fifteen soldiers, and the Navy people who ran the boats. It was an open boat, but there was an area down below where you could pee and that kind of thing. We crossed over at night and stopped briefly in Sicily for a day.

SMITH: This must have been after the Italian Campaign?

EDELSTEIN: The Italian Campaign was still going on. Sicily had been liberated, and then there was the landing at Anzio, and the troops were just on the point of entering Rome. We were transported again at night, in another open boat, from Sicily to Naples. It was not a long voyage, but that was one of the most exciting nights of my life, as it would have been for anybody, because Vesuvius was erupting. It was, as you can imagine, extraordinary. Were these bombs, or was it the volcano? [laughter] Unbelievable. It meant a great deal to me, many years later, to read that magnificent book by Susan Sontag called *The Volcano Lover*. If you've not read it and you want a fantastic literary and historical experience, you should read it. It's about Lord Nelson and the Hamiltons, and volcanos, and the phenomenon of collecting. It's a

really remarkable book.

In any case, we landed and then we were in another staging area, and there was more processing to get us ready to go to the front. In the camp there in Naples I met somebody else who became one of my closest friends, and has remained so to this day, Mortimer Jagust. He is a medical doctor. I think we were in the same tent or in adjacent tents. He and I took to each other, and we discovered Naples together. Naples of course is an extraordinary city. Somehow or other Mortimer had met a girl, and she came from a very good family. She lived up on the hill where all the good families lived, overlooking the city and the Bay of Naples, which is of course one of the most beautiful natural sites in the world. We were very lucky because she invited us to her house, where I met her sisters and other girls and we had very good time. We went there a couple of times and we listened to music. There were big debates about who was the greatest conductor in the world, and that kind of thing.

Then the curtain fell on all of these good experiences, and I was shipped up and Morty Jagust went somewhere else. I was shipped up to what was known as the Gothic Line, but first I went to Florence, where the war paused for a while. I've forgotten exactly where I joined the front, but it was just below Florence. I was assigned to a number of different outfits. I don't know why now, but I was a replacement. I was not initially part of a division, but whenever a division had lost men and they needed replacements, I came from that pool. So I was part of the 34th

Infantry Division for a long time, and I was part of the 85th Infantry Division for a long time. At one point I was assigned to British troops and I was in the Boboli Gardens with the troops the night the Germans blew up the bridges of Florence. I saw it myself. It was terrible, and totally unnecessary. It didn't help them get away any faster; it was just an act of meanness on their part.

Before I went to Florence I was with the troops that were approaching San Gimignano, the town with those great medieval towers, and I recall vividly when the order came that we had to stop, because some of the men, including Frederick Hartt, who wrote so much about Michelangelo, said, "You can't bomb San Gimignano. It's bad enough, what we've already done outside of Rome." Somehow they stopped the order to bomb San Gimignano, and we entered that magnificent town. Then there was Florence, and these were just days of spending your life on your stomach, crawling through mud and rocks and having to get up in the middle of the night in ice cold rain to go out on guard duty. Your life depended on a redneck sergeant who you had to follow. But he really knew how to move around without attracting attention, and he knew his way with guns, although I knew my way with guns too. Actually, to my great surprise, I got all kinds of decorations for sharpshooting. I couldn't believe it, but it kept happening. I was very good with that rifle. Anyway, I saw Florence for the first time, and of course this made an enormous difference in my life.

The war proceeded, we came to that famous Gothic Line during that winter of '43–'44, and everything stopped. The Germans really dug in in the Apennines north of Florence and south of Bologna, and everything just stopped. Every night was more miserable than the previous one, and there were terrific bombardments. I remember the Indian troops, these exotic men with their beards, and these soldiers who would hold hands. I'd never seen anything like that in my life. And their mules, because only the mules could go up the muddy, slippery slopes of the Apennines; they're beautiful but treacherous, very steep-sided. It was scary; I was terrified every minute. I saw a lot of people go—wounded, killed. I shot off an awful lot of ammunition.

[Tape III, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: I'm happy to say I never saw anybody shot from one of my bullets, but I saw very vividly and closely a lot of people get hurt. I saw a lot of American soldiers hurt themselves, as a matter of fact, in order not to have to go through another day of this. Finally it came to an end, we moved forward, up into the Po Valley, and the war ended. I moved back and forth a number of times before that, and I remember that day, as everybody who lived through it remembered. Somehow the movement of the army got me back to Tuscany—I can't remember the details now. I was on guard duty. Incidentally, I never got any higher grade in the army than private first class. I tried everything. I wanted to go to this training class and that training class and I wanted to go to officer's school. I wanted to be more than a

pfc, but it never happened. I don't know why. I'm sure I wasn't a great soldier, but I obeyed orders, and although I was never a terribly physical kind of person, I was in reasonably good shape and I was able to do what everybody else did. I always thought I was more intelligent than the people who were giving me orders, but that goes without saying in that kind of circumstance. Anyway, I don't know what it was, but I think I'm in the company of a lot of people in that respect.

To continue with my story: I was outside of Lucca, which of course is one of Tuscany's most charming and most interesting cities, and I again was doing guard duty. The war with Japan of course had ended and I don't know what we were guarding against. Maybe the war had not ended entirely. The chronology has gotten fuzzy in my mind, but there I was, outside of Lucca on the day that Franklin Roosevelt died. Lucca is surrounded by a wall, as so many medieval cities are, but it's an unusual wall because it's so wide that there is a two-lane area on which you can drive on top of the wall. Have you been there?

SMITH: No, I haven't.

EDELSTEIN: It's very beautiful, and people walk up there, around the wall. But I was down at the bottom, and behind me was this great wall. I had been walking around, it was night time, and somebody called from somewhere that Roosevelt died. Of course I was deluged with tears. Everybody was crying. I don't know, the setting, the time . . . everything about it was unusual, and it was really the end of things. On

the day that the war came to an end I was in the city of Verona, sitting in a barber's chair. The barber's shop was on the second floor of a building overlooking the piazza. The windows were open, and there was a little balcony with an iron railing. I was in the first chair, and at that point I was being shaved. There was this enormous uproar from the piazza below. The war was over. The barber ran out on the balcony with the razor in his hand—he had only half shaved me—and then he ran out, down the street, and I never saw him again. I had to wipe the rest of the shaving cream off. I don't know whether I finished the shave myself or not. I only remember that he was gone and I had to get out. I took the cloth off and the towel, and I ran out into the street. There was a huge party, and it went on forever, with everybody kissing and embracing and drinking and all that kind of stuff; it was fantastic.

Later, I was in Milan. How I got from one place to another, I don't recall, but there was an enormous amount of movement, and whoever kept track of things did a very good job, because I don't know how they did it. But things sorted themselves out, and there I was in Milan. I didn't see it myself, but this was the time when Mussolini was caught up north and he was brought back to Milan and he and his lady friend were hung upside down in a gasoline station there.

Then we made our way up to the Tyrol, which I fell in love with, and still haven't lost my feeling for. It was the end of the summer, and this was the end of the bad times and the beginning of a remarkable year in my life. The Pacific war was

over, and everybody felt good. I was in a camp, sleeping on a cot. It was real camping because we were two men to a tent out in this beautiful countryside, with marvelous, towering evergreen trees, and just a few feet away there was a little brook, doing what little brooks are supposed to do, gurgling over stones. It was spectacular, with the sunlight through these trees and the crisp air . . . very sweet. The war was over, and it was just marvelous. We hung around there for days and days, really not doing anything. I tried to make friends with a guy who was a coal miner from western Pennsylvania, a Czech fellow. I have a photograph of me with him. He was a very scary fellow. I don't know why he took to me or why I hung around with him, because he'd get drunk, and when he was drunk he was a totally different person. He was violent and abusive and he would say terrible things about Jews. He was just awful. But then when he wasn't drunk he seemed to be a nice companion. I don't know what threw us together, but there we were.

But most of the time, again, as in previous times, I was alone, and I used to go for long walks. We hardly had anything to do; it was just the usual roll call and inspections and that sort of thing. The army had announced its plan for sending soldiers back home to the States. They came up with a system of points, and you achieved points by age, length of service, marital status, and being wounded had something to do with it too. Well, I had a lot of service. I was in the army for three and a half years, as it turned out, but I had not been wounded. I had been hurt a

number of times by falls. I had one very bad fall and I was in the hospital, but that wasn't a wound. It was night- time and we were up on the Gothic Line, moving from one place to another. I had a huge pack on my back, and I fell and hurt myself rather badly. I guess I recovered, although now occasionally when I have twinges in my back which are arthritic, I am tempted to date it back to that time. In any case, I had not been wounded in the technical sense. So I had a lot of points, and I could have, within a reasonable amount of time, gone home.

There was one morning I'll never forget. It was early, the sun was out, twinkling through those trees, and the brook was making its merry little noises. The air was crisp and cool and sweet; it was absolute bliss, and I was enjoying every second of it. I came out of my tent and I saw a notice stuck to the tree, the bulletin board, which looked new, so I went over and looked at it. In its wisdom, the army and various governmental types had figured out that they couldn't send everybody home at once. There weren't enough jobs for everybody who was returning. All of these troops couldn't just descend on the United States, so they staggered people returning. The little notice said that in order to give the troops opportunities, as well as delay return of some people, the United States Army had arranged with various universities throughout Western Europe to allow people who were desirous and qualified to stay and take courses and live under army care. You could go to Oxford, the University of Paris, Grenoble, or the University of Florence. Maybe there were

others, but I remember those four very well.

In two shakes I was in the staff sergeant's office. I said I wanted to sign up for the University of Florence. The next thing I knew I was in Florence. On the western edge of the city is a park called Le Cascine. It's one of the most beautiful parks in Europe, along the Arno River. Now it's been absorbed by development. There's a very small, elegant race track in the Cascine. Mussolini had built luxurious black and green marble buildings there to house an elite corps of air cadets. It was gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. There I was, ensconced in these quarters, which consisted of suites housing four men. Each had his own bedroom. There was a common living room area and a common bathroom area: toilets and sinks and showers. In addition to that, there was a big common room where one could sit around and listen to music. There were middle-aged to elderly ladies from the town, who would sit at a desk and help out with the needs of the soldiers who wanted to learn where to go and what to do, and so on. Each suite had assigned to it its own German prisoner of war who would do things like shine shoes, make beds, shave you, run errands, etcetera, etcetera. During the day there was the university. Well, I lived like a king. There was the city, there was the university, I studied history, I studied Italian. I worked very hard, actually, and learned a lot.

I remember calling home early on, telling my mother and father that I wouldn't be home for another year. My mother cried and said, "This is going to break your

father's heart." My father cried, and said, "This is going to break your mother's heart." [laughter] They said, "How can you do this to us? You've been gone so long. We worried day and night," and da-da-da. This was all true, of course, and I had feelings of guilt, but those were quickly subsumed, and it was, as you can imagine, a great year. Everything was open to us. We got our pay as army soldiers, I worked hard, and I walked. It was quite a walk from the Cascine to the university, but it was nothing to me in those days.

One of the three people who shared the suite with me was Mel Seiden, who lives in Boston. I've forgotten what his profession was, but he became a very rich man, and a very important figure in the art world. He and a group of people started Artemis, which is a sort of combine that buys art and then sells it. Artemis is quite a power in the art/commercial world. Mel became quite a figure in the world of finance, and in Boston cultural politics. Another roommate was a poet, Peter Viereck, who had to live down the fact that his father was a real Nazi. The fourth roommate was a man who became the assistant conductor of the Metropolitan Opera orchestra. For years later I used to listen to him being interviewed on Saturday afternoon for the Texaco program. I can't remember his name.

So we all went off and did our various individual things at the university, and occasionally we would do things together. Mostly we went off on our own. I became friendly with the nice lady, a Florentine society type, who sat at the desk, and

she told me about her experiences during the war, when she had gone off to North Africa. She was a rather motherly type and she reminded me of my own mother, actually. She looked like her a little bit, with sort of honey-colored hair, which my mother had. I can remember her stories of the war, washing without soap, and of course this was right after the war, and we had all kinds of rations given to us. I remember giving her soap quite frequently. We had cigarettes, which were given to us. Those were the days when people smoked. Nobody knew about cigarettes and tobacco, or if they did know they kept it to themselves. I certainly didn't know. I smoked some, but mostly I used cigarettes the way other people did. I'm sort of ashamed to admit it, but cigarettes were currency. I would do what everybody else did. I'd go into Florence, and there was a meeting point on the terrace in front of Santa Maria Novella, where you met people and sold your cigarettes. I got a lot of money for them.

And what did I do with the money? I went sightseeing. On weekends I'd go to Siena or Lucca or Rome. I did everything. It was just unbelievable. With all that I still worked very hard. I read, and I walked. I tell people that I walked from somewhere north of Rome to the Brenner Pass as a soldier, but then I must have walked twice as far exploring Florence. I really got to know it. I was out every possible minute, and I didn't even notice the winter. Actually, that was a rather mild winter for Florence. Florence can be very nasty in the late fall and winter, even the

early spring. I met a girl, one of Florence's society ladies, and because of her I met Bernard Berenson. He had come back to I Tatti after being hidden away in the countryside all during the war. The girl asked me if I would like to meet him, and I said of course. So I went up and met him, and he gave me a limp handshake and retreated to his blanket that he was covered up in, and that was that. [laughter] No brilliant conversation or anything. He was perfectly civil, but that was about it. Anyway, I can say that I met him.

It was just a fantastic year. I've often thought of what would have happened if I had stayed another year. I could have stayed a second year, but I didn't; that seemed to be too much. The year came to an end and I came home by way of Naples. And who do I see in Naples but Morty Jagust, my friend that I had met and had spent so much time with when I first arrived at that Naples camp—unbelievable coincidence. We couldn't believe it. We spent day and night together. There was nothing to do; we were just waiting and filling out forms until they told us to get on a ship. It was a long wait. Now that the war was over, Naples was different. We had lots of cigarettes to sell, and it was wonderful there. I think about it from time to time, especially when I observe the phenomenon of pizza in America. Pizza's become an American thing, but it was in Naples that I had my first piece of pizza and developed a standard by which I've judged all succeeding pizza. It reminds me of our conversation last night about bagels. The first pizza I had was from a brick oven that was built

right on the street. Sometimes the ovens were attached to a building. The pizza maker would stand right out on the street with his oven roaring away, and make a pizza, which he would sell by the slice. Well, the taste of that pizza, thin, crusty, is with me to this day, and nothing has ever equaled it. It was only much later that it began to be imported into America and it became such a staple of our diet and a part of our culture. Then it was re-imported into Italy as an American thing, just the way Coca-Cola and McDonalds and everything else have been imported. But anyway, Morty and I had a marvelous time again. We were constantly together. We went to the opera, and sat for hours and hours in the *galleria*. Do you know Naples?

SMITH: No, I don't.

EDELSTEIN: The two great *gallerie* of Italy are those in Naples and Milan. These are enormous structures, glass roofed. Somebody with an odd sense of comparison would say they were the first malls. In a sense they are. There are inside shops covering blocks; they're vast, vast, and very beautiful. They are places for the Italians to do what they do best, which is walk and talk at the same time. That's what people do there. You stop and have a coffee or go to one of the shops or a restaurant, and you walk up and down and talk. There's a wonderful book called *The Gallery* by John Horne Burns, which is very evocative of all of that. He wrote it shortly after the war. Anyway, we spent time there, and we'd go down to the bay and sit in cafés, and we just relaxed.

Finally we got on a boat, about which I remember nothing, and we just zoomed across the Atlantic. Home was new to me, because during the war my father had prospered in his career as a merchant. This was unusual in his life, but prosperity came to many people in the States during the war. It was at that point that he had begun to dabble in real estate, and for a while he did very well. He did well because workers came to work in the Bethlehem steel yards in Baltimore and various other places and they needed housing. So he did rather well, and my family had moved from above the store on Washington Boulevard to a nice house they bought on Edgewood Road in what was then a very pretty suburb of Baltimore. It's a slum now, but then it was very pretty. The house was set off, with a nice garden, lovely fruit trees of some kind in the back, and a big front porch. I think that was known as the Park Heights section of Baltimore. It was pretty, it was green—a typical suburban neighborhood. It was a block and a half from the big street where the streetcar ran.

I wanted to go back to the university, there was no question about it. I didn't even think about it. I didn't think that there might be other things to do. I just assumed that that would be my life, and it was time to go back, which I did. I don't think I had more than a few days to become acclimated.

SMITH: You just moved back into home to live with your parents?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. It just was taken for granted, you see. I went back to Johns Hopkins on the GI Bill, and they welcomed me back with open arms. I had a lot of

credits. I sat down with the university authorities and we added them all up. I had that year at CCNY, and then I had that year at the University of Florence. I became a teaching assistant. Actually, I had been a teaching assistant before, as an undergraduate. I don't know if I mentioned that. I was very pleased and honored about that because it was one of my first real jobs.

As I said, I worked for my father from time to time in one store or another, but I never really thought that was a job; it was more a way to earn an allowance. I always thought that work was sort of demeaning—selling ladies' underwear, sweeping the store and all that kind of stuff. But I did it. I worked for my uncle from time to time. Mostly it was an act of charity on his part. My uncle's name was Paul. He was my mother's brother. He was someone I never really knew very well, and I don't think I liked him, which was probably very unfair on my part. I didn't like him because I thought he was cruel to my mother and to other people in the family. He always argued with them. There was a traumatic scene from my childhood which really disturbed me very much for many years. Paul was in the poultry business and led a very different kind of life than we did. He was very worldly and sophisticated, or so I thought, and moved in other circles. He came around to see the family in token kinds of ways and he wasn't as nice to my grandparents as my mother and father were, so I always felt sort of suspicious about him. I'm sorry about it now, because I think he was probably a much more interesting man than I was ever able to

realize, and I had a jaundiced point of view about him because of my parents' feelings, and I never had an opportunity to learn about him for myself. In any case, my father and mother had lent him money, and he was paying it off by giving them a chicken or two once a week. That's what people did then; those were hard times. I was a very young boy, maybe ten, or nine; it was in the early thirties.

My uncle had his poultry business in downtown Baltimore, right where the Camden Yards ballpark now stands. You would go in there and you'd be in another world. There was a filthy smell of chickens; they're the dirtiest animals in the world. Men stood around with these bloody aprons and big boots, in all this gore, killing chickens right and left. My uncle would go off to the eastern shore of Maryland to get the chickens, which, like the tomatoes on the eastern shore in those days, were supposed to be the best in the world. They always tasted very good, I must say. But anyway, he'd come out of this dark hole covered in blood and feathers, holding two chickens by the neck and it was just awful. There were chicken coops all over the place, made of wood, and one of the jobs I had once was to clean them. You know, chicken shit is particularly messy. I didn't last very long on that job.

I overheard my mother once, screaming at my uncle, saying things were so terrible they didn't know what to do. She was in a terrible state, crying, and very, very unhappy. This must have been close to the time I talked about, when they had to move out of the house and into a cousin's house. My mother was asking her brother

how he could be so cruel, taking years to pay off this debt by giving them a chicken once a week. She said he'd have to come up with some money. He was saying, "Well, if I didn't give you that chicken you wouldn't have anything to eat." I thought he was very callous. I can remember that scene because I didn't hear many such things. My mother and father were very clever or very good, and I really wasn't exposed to much of what must have been a very horrible situation, not only for my family but for so many during that period. These traumatic moments, like the time that I asked for another bowl of soup, were really few and far between. I think that's why I remember them.

At one time my uncle had expanded from the chicken business into meat distribution. He had a very large refrigeration place where they kept the meat. I had another job with him once where I was supposed to go into this huge meat locker and keep an inventory or something. I couldn't stand it. I couldn't stand the sight of all that meat. I still can't. I was way ahead of the movement to eat less meat, I can tell you. I eat it occasionally, I'm not that pure. It wasn't only the sight of all that meat, but the cold; I couldn't stand the cold. That job didn't last for long either. So my uncle didn't have a very high opinion of me. He thought I was sort of wimpish. Anyway, I had all kinds of different jobs. So back to the university and the teaching assistant job. I had done this even before the war, and it was wonderful.

[Tape IV, Side One]

EDELSTEIN: It was marvelous because for the first time I was really earning something on my own. I think we got something like $300 a semester.

SMITH: In addition to your GI Bill?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. You see, I was paid, and the GI Bill took care of my tuition and stuff.

SMITH: So I assume you were focusing on Italian history?

EDELSTEIN: I was focusing on Italian history.

SMITH: What period?

EDELSTEIN: The Renaissance. I graduated in 1947, and I did well. The proudest thing I had—I wore it for a long time, till I lost it—was my Phi Beta Kappa key. I did all the things one does at that age that one thinks are important, which are not. In high school I had this National Honor Society pin and I actually wore it all the time. Can you imagine such silliness? And I thought this Phi Beta Kappa key was the real thing.

SMITH: So you got your M.A. then?

EDELSTEIN: No, I never did get an M.A.

SMITH: Oh, so you continued with graduate study.

EDELSTEIN: I just continued with graduate study. I fell into a rut, actually, and life was easy. I had this teaching all the time, it was easy, and I was living at home. I had

one very good friend, my closest friend to this day, although he lives in Baltimore: Joe [Joseph L.] Cowan, who is a psychiatrist. He's just recently retired. He went to medical school at the University of Chicago. It's funny . . . he writes letters. He's quite a correspondent. He also thinks of himself as a poet. He tries to express himself, and I really think that's great. His poetry is published in medical journals. He's an interesting fellow. He has a mind, and he uses it, and he makes very cogent observations about social things and politics and one thing or another. I'm a very poor correspondent, but we talk to each other periodically on the phone and we see each other every now and then.

In those years we saw each other constantly, I mean constantly. He and I used to play tennis together, but mostly we talked and we walked. We walked the city of Baltimore. His family lived not too far away, in an apartment. I never knew people who'd lived in an apartment before, and I thought that was the height of sophistication. His father was the owner of a big and very successful men's clothing store downtown, and he knew everybody in the city. In my silly view at that time his parents really out-classed mine because they went out for dinner and they dressed differently. They were very nice to me, and I was very much at home at their house. I was in and out, and Joe was in and out of my house all the time. He loved my mother. Everybody loved my mother because she talked so easily with everybody and she fed them so well. We'd sit on the lovely porch and talk long into the night. We'd

get into his car, and there was an all night hamburger joint on North Avenue just off of Charles Street. So we'd go there, and we'd get a booth, and we'd sit in this booth eating huge hamburgers and ice cream sodas, or enormous triple-decker club sandwiches. I can remember we consumed enormous amounts of food. That was our hangout, we'd go there all the time. It's a slum now, too, but it was nice then.

I had a number of friends, but I kept them separated, because they were from different worlds; they didn't know each other. I was very close to Joe, we saw each other constantly, but I also spent a lot of time with a totally different group of friends. I guess maybe it was the influence of the war, but I don't really think so. Those years at Johns Hopkins, between when I returned at the end of the war and 1949, when I left, were really years when I discovered different worlds—worlds upon worlds. Part of that was moving out of the close, Jewish family structure of Baltimore. Although I remained in Baltimore, I moved quite easily and with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction, in a different world. I don't know where that time came from, but when you're young, you have it, you know.

I made friends at the university with three people in particular; they were all members of the history department, and they were all pillars of the WASP establishment in Baltimore—I'm not exaggerating—in terms of social, economic, and religious backgrounds and circumstances. My closest friend was Tom Copeland. Another friend, whom I didn't know as well but he was part of the circle, and we were

always together, was Pitts Raleigh. And there was a woman named Helen Garth. I don't know if Pitts is still alive, I've lost touch with him, but Tom Copeland has died. They came from old Baltimore families. They lived in beautiful old houses in the best sections of town. Tom lived with his mother and his sister down on Bolton Street, in a beautiful brownstone house. Pitts lived in a marvelous house with his mother in Roland Park, which is a lovely WASP suburb just north of Johns Hopkins, off of University Parkway; it's still a marvelous place to live.

I can't remember where Helen Garth came from, but she was very rich, and she came from an important family. She too was in the history department. She was a character. She was the sort of person who, having always had everything, could get away with making fun of it, or being eccentric. I can remember the very first time I came round to her desk. I told you about Hopkins establishing itself on the seminar system. All the graduate students had desks lined up one after the other in the stacks of Gilman Hall. Hers was behind mine, and I came around to meet her. She had a box, like one of those file boxes, which said "Odds and Ends" on it, and I didn't know what it meant, so I asked her what that meant. She said, "Well, you're a funny fellow; it means miscellaneous," and I said, "Why doesn't it *say* that?" She said, "It does say that. It says 'Odds and Ends.'" And that's the way she was. She wrote a very interesting dissertation on Mary Magdalene as portrayed in medieval sculpture in churches. She was interested in French sculptural representations of Mary Magdalene

on buildings. This was all new to me, and I learned a lot from her. We became very fond of each other. So the four of us were friends. Pitts was always in and out, and we fluctuated because they played bridge and I didn't. I had never learned to play bridge, and I was snobbish about it; I thought it was a waste of time. But they played bridge and drank a lot. I drank, but I didn't drink a lot, certainly not like they did. I guess when they were playing bridge I was with Joe Cowan.

I had a girlfriend for a long time during those days, Inez Riemer. We saw too much of each other. I really should have experimented and moved around a little bit more. But we were comfortable with each other, and she was very nice, an artist, and a rather good one. I lost track of her very soon after I left Baltimore, but I learned of her because she did a drypoint etching of Wallace Stevens. She married somebody who lived in Hartford. I saw this drypoint etching on the front cover of Trinity College magazine, and it was by Inez Riemer. She had a studio downtown in the section of Baltimore that I liked, near Mount Vernon Place again, and I spent a lot of time in her studio watching her work, and just sitting around listening to music and talking about art. I met a lot of Baltimore artistic types through her, and there again, I learned a lot. I hate to use such a banal word as "flowering," but I really opened up, and so many things happened to me.

SMITH: One of the things I wanted to ask you about was this tension between your Jewish identity and what might be called cosmopolitanism. One of the things about

the twenties and thirties is that's the peak period of anti-Semitism in the United States. Were you aware of the presence of anti-Semitism?

EDELSTEIN: I was very much aware of it, yes. I never personally suffered it in those days—not to an extent that it meant a great deal to me. But I was very much aware of it, my father and mother talked about it all the time. They talked about it at Dave Fishman's kitchen table on those Sunday afternoons. They talked about Germany and Europe. I think I knew more about Dreyfus at age ten than any other kid.

SMITH: But even in the U.S. most American private universities had their quotas.

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, that's right, and so did Johns Hopkins, very much so. I was aware of problems that Jews had had at Johns Hopkins, particularly in the medical school. There was no question about it, they had very strict quotas and they were not quotas in the sense that we have them today in order to allow people in; these were quotas in order to keep people out. So I was very much aware of this and it was a constant subject for discussion. In our house and in other people's houses that I went to, there was always literature about it. Part of the Sunday afternoons at the Fishman's house was stocking up on all these flyers and magazines in English and Yiddish and Russian and Polish and Hebrew that he would gather together from the whole world.

I kept a clipping file myself. I had files and files and files. It's something I'd

taken over from my father, who always clipped things. I tell you, one of the sad things about getting older is that you have fewer and fewer people with whom to share the clippings. It's interesting. Just as there are fewer and fewer people to whom I can send postcards now when I travel. But you know, that's the way of life. But I still do clip, and when I read the newspaper I read it with a red pen in my hand. I'm a newspaper freak. I spend far too much time reading the newspaper. What goes around comes around; the names and the places are different, but the story is the same. But to get back to this "tension," I was very much aware of it, and these were the kinds of things that I talked about with Joe Cowan.

SMITH: What about in the army? Was there anti-Semitism?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, it came up every now and then and I'd have a wise-ass comment to make. There were lots of verbal assaults, and I would just walk away, or I would say something and court trouble, but I never got into physical fights over it.

SMITH: But you didn't seem to have the kinds of experiences that would push a person into a militant Jewish identity.

EDELSTEIN: No, no I did not.

SMITH: You felt that the world was open to you?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, but you see I kept these worlds separate. The social life that I led with my Jewish friends, my girlfriend and with Joe Cowan, was totally separate from the life I led at the university, where I had one Jewish friend, Herbert Zafren,

who was also in that graduate student group. He was a very observant Jew. He went off to become the librarian of the Hebrew Union Theological Seminary in Ohio, and became quite a scholar. He and I spent a lot of time together, but not outside the university; he never became part of that other circle I spoke of.

So my life was separated. There was a tension, maybe even a conflict, but that tension existed even before I was conscious of it or could name it. I'm not sure it doesn't still exist. I'm very Jewish. I'm not an observant Jew, but there's no question that I'm Jewish. I'm very much aware of my traditions and my inheritance, and I think very highly of it. For the first time in my life, here in Bristol, Rhode Island, as of two months ago, I joined a congregation. I never have before, but I did it here, now. The action was taken on the spur of the moment, but I think there was a long gestation behind it, especially here, in the shadow of St. Michael's Church, the church where my wife was baptized and confirmed as an Episcopalian, and where her father was a vestryman. Her brother was also involved in the church. He unfortunately is not able to do anything anymore, and it's very sad. Eleanor had three brothers. One is dead, one is eighty and not very well, but her youngest brother, of whom Eleanor was perhaps fondest, had a terrible accident eleven years ago and has been a vegetable in one of these places that he'll never leave.

But I ask myself, in what remains of this Yankee town, with its long history, why did I do this? I think I did it because this was a concrete way of establishing my

identity. I don't have any doubt that all these people with whom I have contact know that I am Jewish. Of course they do. But I feel the need to assert it—I hope the right way. There's a very interesting congregation here in town. It's only a block away, on High Street. It's very attractive, and tiny. There are two storeys; the sacristy is on the second floor. It's very pretty, more than a hundred years old. There was no membership or anything for some years and it was restored about twenty years ago. There's a very small congregation, many of whom do not come from Bristol, but from nearby communities.

It has services only every now and then. It has a Friday evening Sabbath service once a month, if that, and it's very ecumenical. I don't find the services terribly satisfying, because they are on a level which is elementary, to say the least. But I sense in everybody there the same feeling that I have, what E. M. Forster referred to in two words which are the best thing he ever said or wrote: "only connect." Everybody is there to make a connection with himself or herself and the person next to him, and all those people who came before us. I find that satisfying. The guy who conducts the services is not even a rabbi; it's too small a congregation to support a rabbi. They don't even import one for the high holidays. They've got this interesting fellow, a psychologist in Providence. He's a cantor, leading the service, and he's very bright. He made a joke, saying, "You might well ask why I'm here doing this," and he paused and said, "Because I know how." Which is true. He

knows his way around the hymns and the blessings and the prayer book and this, that and the other, and there's a first-rate chorus. I love the music there. To tell you the truth, it's as good as you get.

SMITH: Your general direction after the war was to move away from religion.

EDELSTEIN: I moved far, far away from it. I never forgot it, but it wasn't important in my life. And it's not the first thing in my life now. I feel that it's in place, where it belongs.

SMITH: Eleanor is not Jewish; was that a problem with your family?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, at first it was a big problem with my family and with hers. But that blew over. We met in Florence. Do you really want to hear all this?

SMITH: Sure, why not? You went back to Florence to study some more, right?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. I went back to Florence in 1949. It was the first year of the Fulbright grants. I had a Fulbright travel grant, and I had a second grant from the Italian government to study at the University of Florence, and it was a wonderful academic year. I lived in a *pensione* right smack in the middle of Florence, right at the end of the Ponte Santa Trinità. It couldn't have been more ideal: a marvelous *pensione* with a big window on the top floor of the building, from which I could see all of Florence and the hills of Fiesole on the other side of the river. So I went to the university and I studied with Gaetano Salvemini, and other interesting people, and I met Eleanor. That fall was cold, but I remember Eleanor and I spent Christmas

morning sitting in the sun at an outdoor café on the other side of the river. That afternoon was terribly cold and there was snowfall or freezing rain or something, but the morning was just gorgeous.

But to go back earlier than that, I was living in this *pensione,* and every week there was a free concert in the Corsini Palace, and I used to go to it. There was a guy named Ryerson, who I met at the university or in one of the cafés. He came from Ohio. I didn't think much of him of him because I didn't think he was serious. Somebody told me that the Ryersons of Chicago were very rich people—steel mills or something, I don't know. I didn't like him. One day, as I was going to one of these concerts, this guy Ryerson came along with Eleanor. We met at the intersection where the Lung'Arno and the end of the Ponte Santa Trinità meet. Eleanor was wearing a long, gray raincoat, belted. We were all going to the same place. That was it, that was the beginning. We continued to see each other here and there. Eleanor had come to Italy with a girlfriend, Ruth Welch, who was a school friend from Providence. Ruth was one of her close friends, and has remained so. She has lived in Geneva for many years. She came from Chappaquiddick. Eleanor and I spent our honeymoon in her house there—a one-day honeymoon.

In any case, Eleanor and Ruth had been in Italy over the summer, and at the end of the summer Eleanor decided to stay. She was living in Venice, but she got sick; she had some sort of intestinal problem. Venice is marvelous, a fantastic place

to be, but not if you're not feeling well when the weather turns cold and damp; it's not the place you want to be. So she decided to leave Venice and come down to Florence. She was going to look into the foreign language school, and she was going to write; that's why she was there. So we got to know each other. She wasn't very happy with the place where she was living. It was far out, and she always had to find transportation; she wasn't in the center of things. So I told her my *pensione* was right across the river, and it was gorgeous, and why didn't she move in there? Well, we've been together ever since. [laughter] That was it.

We lived together in that *pensione* for the remainder of that year. It was scandalous of course in those times. After all, in 1950 one didn't do those things. Today of course it's routine, but one didn't do those things then. We were very good friends with the young woman of the family that ran the *pensione* and she looked the other way. It was not an easy life. Neither of us had very much money. Eleanor had more than I did, but not much. I think she had $1,000 on which she lived the entire year. I had what I was getting from the grant that I had, so we ate in the student mess hall every night. But it was good, we did all kinds of wonderful things.

We decided that we were going to get married. I certainly don't regret getting married, but I think we made a mistake in coming back to the U.S. We didn't have to come back, but we thought our families would want us to do that. Who knows how different things would have been if we had stayed on in Italy, because that's what we

really wanted to do, just continue to live there. I would have found something to do. It was at that time that the appeal of academic life had begun to wear off. I didn't know what I wanted to do, I had no idea, but I knew it would have something to do with writing and books. Eleanor didn't know what she wanted either, but we were happy, and we loved being in Italy. We felt so much at home there. We knew a lot of people and we didn't need very much money. We didn't have very much, but we didn't need more. But we came home because we were really conventional people, when you come right down to it.

I remember we sailed home on an ocean liner; I can't remember which one it was. We sailed from Genoa down to Naples, to Lisbon. I remember showing Eleanor Naples, and we both explored Lisbon and loved it. Then we sailed to New York. It was a scene right out of a Marx brothers movie, because our families met us, and Eleanor went off with her family, I went off with mine, and they didn't meet. Eleanor's brother, Paul, the one that she was closest to, met her. One family didn't know about the other at that point, and we went off to separate hotels, because it was night and too late to make one's way to Rhode Island or to Maryland. I think I was really quite cruel to my family, because my father and mother and sister and I went off and had dinner, and after dinner I excused myself. I said there was somebody I had to see. Eleanor made whatever excuses she made, and I went off and met her and her brother, Paul; she had told him about us, so the three of us went off and had drinks. I

remember the exchange of letters they had; they were about my being Jewish. Paul was a very worldly fellow, much more so than most other people in his family. He had lived in Paris, had married a French-Russian girl who wasn't Jewish, but she was of a very different order than his family, and there was a lot of objection to her. Even so, he corresponded with Eleanor, wanting to be sure she knew what she was doing [regarding her relationship with me.]

[Tape IV, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: There was nothing that one could take exception to; it was more to do with brotherly love and attention, that she should be sure of what she was doing and what the problems would be, and so on. We never had any qualms about how we could handle this. We had trepidations about having to go through the trauma, but so what. Eleanor broke the news to her family in her way, and I broke the news to my family, and of course it was very, very disturbing. It was just something that one had to get through. My mother cried and my father cried, and mother repeated what she said when I said I wasn't coming home from the army: "You're going to break your father's heart." And my father said, "You're going to break your mother's heart." And then my mother's brother, my Uncle Paul, got into the act. He called me in and gave me a very avuncular talk, saying that this wasn't the thing to do, that non-Jewish girls were never really trustworthy and they didn't have the high standards that Jewish girls had—all this nonsense talk, and I just listened to it all. Actually, Paul tried to

buy me off with x amount of money. I could go back to Europe and he would pay for it. So this went on and on, until it just died down.

Then the time came when Eleanor was to meet my family and stay in their house. Everybody worried about this, including me, and how it would go, but Eleanor has always been a master of social occasions. She's smart and she's charming, then as now, and she is sincerely and deeply interested in people, and in making things easy for them. She just charmed the socks off my mother and father. I think it was immediate; it was absolutely immediate. They just fell in love with her, from that moment on. That ritual they had gone through was only that, a ritual, you see, because nobody could have felt deeply about the kinds of things they said they felt and have acted the way they did, which was to accept her completely. My mother and father adored her, and she was very fond of them.

With my sister . . . well, with her there was never any question. We didn't even talk about it. Which is the story of my sister and me anyway. It's only in recent years that we've had any kind of real communication and have gotten to know each other as two human beings. But she was five years younger. I went off to the army when I was eighteen, during those years when she was becoming a woman. By the time I got home from the army she had her own life. I can't remember even talking about Eleanor with my sister.

My relationship with Eleanor's family was, I'm afraid, a different story.

Whereas there was an absolute immediate embracing of Eleanor on the part of my family, my acceptance by Eleanor's family was a totally different story; there was never an embracing. She met my family first. She came down to Baltimore in the summer and stayed in my mother's and father's house there on Edgewood Road, and then we decided that we were going to get married in the fall—forty-four years ago today!

SMITH: Oh!

EDELSTEIN: November 5, 1950. Guy Fawkes Day. We were going to live in Cambridge, and I had a job lined up. I decided not to go back to school; I dropped everything. I was going to get a Ph.D., and I never did, which is regrettable in some ways. I used to care about it, but I don't anymore; it's long gone. It would have made a lot of difference in very material ways, if I had gotten the degree. But when I broke away from academic life, I broke away so completely that for a very long time it was hard to pick it up again. There were all kinds of interruptions and different things happening, so I never did go back.

In any case, back to the family business. When Eleanor told her family about us she got a lot of flack from them and there was a lot of opposition. Her father was very much against it, her mother was very much against it, but she was fully supported by her twin sister and her brothers. Eleanor is a twin. She and her sister were very, very close, and her sister died tragically and much too young some years

ago. Martha was very supportive, and Martha and I loved each other; there really is no other word for it. We became very close over the years. I never was terribly close to Eleanor's brothers, but I didn't see them as much.

We knew we were going to live in Cambridge, so I moved there alone for a while. I lived in the apartment that we were going to share, and then the time came for me to meet her family. It was the end of the summer and I think I took the train, or Eleanor came up to Cambridge and we took the train together, I don't remember, but I do remember that Martha and her husband Ted met us at the train station and drove us in their car to Eleanor's parents' house. I was very nervous about it. This business about Jew versus non-Jew didn't bother me. I was more nervous about not knowing which fork to use—that kind of thing. It was more a class dilemma that I had than anything else, and it was always that way. I knew from Eleanor's stories as well as my own observation that she came from a very different kind of background, lived a very different kind of family life, in a very grand house. I'd had my fill even then of Eleanor's accounts of the role that her family had played in this town—very commendable indeed. So I was nervous about that kind of thing. I never thought about whether or not I was going to be accepted because I was a Jew. I've always known that that was a problem, but so far as I'm concerned that's a problem for somebody else; it's not my problem. I still feel that way.

Well, I managed to use the right fork. Everybody else was nervous too. I

know, from hindsight, having come to know them, that Eleanor's father and mother were just as nervous as I was. That family had a storybook background and history—storybook in the sense of usual, not in the sense of marvelous. For example, the name of Franklin Roosevelt was forbidden to be mentioned, and when he died, somebody said, "Oh, good!" The word "Jew" was hardly mentioned and if it was, one of the synonyms, like "kike" or something was used instead—not necessarily in Eleanor's house, I must say, but more in the houses of the people they associated with.

Eleanor's father's sister married a Jew named Austin Levy, who was so ostracized by the family that he decided that he would outdo that family in every possible way. He became richer, more important, a better citizen in every way that you can imagine. And then he died. I never met him, unfortunately, but he and Eleanor's aunt gave us a wonderful wedding present, with which we bought our first car, so it was very, very generous. A thousand dollars in 1950 was a lot of money. We bought a green Plymouth station wagon. Eleanor's oldest brother, Charlie, the one who's eighty now, had married a Jew, Barbara Hess. They're still married. She wasn't very Jewish in the way I was, because she didn't then and doesn't now talk about it; she doesn't refer to herself as Jewish. She's a good woman and she and Eleanor's brother Charlie have had a good marriage. They're together, they had two good nice children, and they take care of each other.

So I wasn't the first, by any means, but they were cool, to say the least.

Eleanor's father told her that it wouldn't last. He called me into his study during that first weekend I spent there. We'd hardly had a word to say to each other. I sat on a leather couch, which, when you sat down and when you got up made a sort of sucking noise—you know, that kind of thing. [laughter] He sat in his chair at his desk across the room from me and asked me just like some Victorian parent would have done, what were my prospects. Would I be able to support his daughter? Did I have a job? Well, I told him what my prospects were, I told him I had a job, I told him that I didn't think I could ever support his daughter in the manner to which she was accustomed, but I expected her to go to work. Then the talk was over, and things remained cool for a very long time. He sat in a corner when we were married. We were married in her house. That's what Eleanor wanted, that's what her mother wanted.

SMITH: Did your parents come along?

EDELSTEIN: My parents did not come up. This was a terrible thing, but it would have been worse if they had. So they didn't. They understood. It was a sort of unspoken but mutual agreement: they never met, the two sets of parents.

SMITH: Did you have an Episcopalian wedding?

EDELSTEIN: No, we had an ecumenical wedding. We had a Unitarian minister and a rabbi. The Unitarian minister was from around here, and he had a friend who was the director of the Hillel place at Harvard. So we went up to Cambridge and talked

to him, and they were both great. They conducted this simple but nice ceremony in the living room of Eleanor's parents' house. There were a lot of people there. Charlie lent us his car and we drove off to Chappaquiddick to spend the night in Ruth Welch's house, very, very close to that spot which Teddy Kennedy made famous. I think it overlooked that little bridge. I was teaching at Shady Hill School in Cambridge, a job which I got through Eleanor's brother, Charlie, who was also teaching there.

SMITH: This was a private—

EDELSTEIN: Private elementary school, very good, still exists; it's been there for a long time. It was an experimental school in its early days, started by I think the daughter of what's his name . . . Whitehead, you know, the philosopher?

SMITH: Oh, Alfred [North] Whitehead. It must have something to do with Charles Eliot Norton, though.

EDELSTEIN: And Charles Eliot Norton. All those people were together with him. All the Cambridge types, and the Harvard faculty sent their children there then, and they still do. It's still a very good school. Charlie Rockwell was more than a teacher there. I think he was a headmaster or a director. Whatever he was, he had a lot of influence there and had taught there for a long time. When I met him we were talking, and this was in the period when I didn't know what I was doing. I thought teaching children might be very interesting, and so I thought I'd try it, and they gave me a job.

SMITH: But pretty quickly you decided that you were going to go to library school?

EDELSTEIN: Well, not so quickly. I'll come to that. I taught for a year. Just to go back to Eleanor's family, little by little things warmed up, but we were never close. In a strange sort of way, I became closer to Eleanor's father, who was never a warm man. I'm sure Eleanor could relay a lifetime of incidents in which he was, but at least to me, and to many other people that I observed, he was never warm and outgoing. He had a remote sort of personality. He was at his best doing two things. He was a great yachtsman. He was at his best on his boat, because that was his metier, that's where he belonged. He was disdainful of anybody who didn't know what to do on a boat and didn't know the terminology.

As with every discipline, or sport, there's jargon that goes with it, and I didn't know it. I knew nothing about boats. I'd always admired them. I knew about fishing boats, and I knew about the boats in Baltimore harbor, the work boats, and I knew about the wonderful night boats that used to go up and down that my father and I took. One time I went with my father from Baltimore all the way to Norfolk, Virginia, down the Chesapeake Bay. You were supposed to go to bed and sleep, but I didn't, I stood out on the deck all night. I was very young, but it was just heaven. So I knew about boats like that, but I didn't know about these big sailboats, and all the terminology that goes with them and the protocol and all of this kind of stuff. All of which was very important, not only to Eleanor's father but to the entire family,

Eleanor included. This was a part of their lives; they didn't have to think about it. So I was clumsy on the boat, and I think Eleanor's father was rather disdainful of me about that. But we went on a couple of cruises with Martha and her husband, Ted. Eleanor's mother never cared much for being on the boat; she just put up with it.

Having a drink before dinner was routine in Eleanor's family. You had a drink before dinner even if you didn't want to; that was what people did. This was the other occasion when her father was at his best. The family would gather in the living room, have a drink before dinner, and then sit down at the dinner table, and it was at those moments that he was a little bit more relaxed. I was more tolerated than accepted by him, but with Eleanor's mother there was never a real coming together. She had her own problems. I can remember many, many good times, but I was sad; I was really never at home.

We went through an awful lot together. I can remember being here in the 1954 hurricane, when Bristol was devastated, and Eleanor's family lost a lot. They had a boathouse down by the shore, and it was just gone. This was a substantial house, not just a little shack, and I can remember the roof, just as if it were a piece of paper, floating off in the wind. Well, everybody lost an awful lot; it was really devastating. The '38 and the '54 hurricanes were horrible. So everybody had to pitch in and rescue things and work; if you didn't you might die. Things were crashing down around you. I did what everybody else did, which was to run around trying to

secure things and helping out and one thing or another. I nearly lost my life trying to rescue a boat. I was cut off from the land. I think I gained a lot of respect in their eyes for that.

I also made [points] with Eleanor's father because I knew how to make a good martini. Little things like that were important. Eleanor's father prided himself on making martinis and it was a big ritual. I think the making of it was more important than the imbibing of it. But I watched him, and I knew how to do it. I had never made a martini before, but one day he was busy, or something had happened, and he couldn't make the martini. I went ahead and made it, and it was perfect. I think it's kind of ridiculous to gain respect that way, but those kinds of things were very important to people at certain times. I don't mean to relate that story in a critical kind of way. Eleanor's father was expressing an attitude that was rather common. There were some people in their circle who accepted me warmly and graciously and sincerely, immediately, and others did not. There was one family that was very close to them, in whose house I was not allowed.

SMITH: Not allowed?

EDELSTEIN: Actually, I went in, but the father of the household went out, because he wasn't having any of that kind of thing. I never went again. I wouldn't have gone if I'd known this would happen. But in some ways this goes back to your original question about "tension." That kind of thing was never a moment of tension for me.

That was the way it always was, and I didn't take it personally. I brushed it off. It wasn't the kind of thing that kept me up at nights. I thought, "The hell with it."

So there we were in Cambridge, in a nice little apartment on Shephard Street. I went off to school to teach, which was a great adventure. I soon came to dislike it, because I wasn't good at it. You don't like things you're not good at, and I spent an awful lot of time at Mount Auburn Cemetery when I should have been hanging around the school. Shady Hill School is adjacent to the cemetery, which is one of the great cemeteries in America. It's naturally very beautiful, it's laid out very well, and it's filled with the graves and monuments of great people. It's a wonderful place to wander and have lunch and read tombstones. It's something I've always liked to do and still do whenever I have the opportunity. There is a great cemetery in Baltimore, Green Mount Cemetery. The architecture and design of cemeteries all through the nineteenth century was quite fascinating. I take photographs in cemeteries whenever I can. So I used to sit in Mount Auburn Cemetery.

I don't even remember the ages of the kids I was teaching; it seems like it was the fifth grade. I was teaching Latin, American History, Civil War, and math. The sciences and mathematics have never been a strong point with me. Later on in life I became interested in the history of science. But not in science [itself]; I'm interested in it as a cultural phenomenon. So I had to teach math, and I was terrible at it. And the Civil War has never caught my imagination the way it has so many other people.

I'm sure I'm missing a lot, but I've just never been interested in the Civil War. I know most of the basic facts, but its history as an important aspect of American growth and development has never played a large part in my scheme of things. I enjoyed teaching Latin because I was more at home in that subject than anything else. I knew what I was doing, to put it bluntly, whereas I didn't know what I was doing with the other subjects. Fortunately, I discovered at an early stage, long before I did any real damage to them, that I wasn't really very good with kids. I don't think I am to this day. I can't remember what age a fifth grader is.

SMITH: About ten years old.

EDELSTEIN: That's a rough period. They're smart and they're active. They always got the better of me. So the year ended, and the school and I said an amicable good-bye. I think they were probably as glad to see me go as I was to leave. What was I going to do? Again, I didn't know.

SMITH: And you wanted to go back to Italy, still?

EDELSTEIN: Oh always, always, but that was always in the background. I was fortunate. In my life I've spent long, wonderful times in Italy. A lot of it thanks to the Getty, of course.

Anyway, during that summer I had an interesting job. I met a group of people who were doing an Italian edition of the *Federalist Papers*, and I had the idea that the *Federalist Papers* were one of the great achievements in American political and

cultural history. I loved them. I can't remember how I made the connection with these people, but there was going to be this Italian edition of the *Federalist Papers*, and because I knew Italian pretty well, I got involved with them and I helped a lot with the translation. There wasn't any money involved. I had only begun to really read the *Federalist Papers* seriously at that point. I did an awful lot of reading in that period. We lived only a few blocks away from the Widener Library and I spent enormous amounts of time there, reading and talking to people; it was a very rich period of my life in that respect. The translation came out many, many years later.

I didn't know what I was going to do next. I didn't want to go back to school, and teaching hadn't worked out. Somehow or other I met a man who was the rabbi of the biggest and most influential reform Jewish temple in Boston. He hired me to do two jobs: one, to edit and bring out the congregation's newsletter, which came out every other week; and two, to research and write his sermons. [laughter] I did this for a year. Oh it was fantastic, what a job. They paid me quite well. There were two or three women in the office, who helped me with the newsletter, gathering information and putting it all together. There were all these little notes about meetings of the various clubs and when things were going to happen, and notes about the holidays that were coming up, who died and who was born and who got married, and all this stuff.

Writing the sermons was something else. This rabbi was an amateur historian,

but not a very good one. He and his new bride went to Spain for their honeymoon, and he went to Toledo. There was a rumor going around that El Greco, who had lived in Toledo, was really a Jew. He came from Greece, and he was supposedly Greek, but he wasn't Greek, he was a Jew. One day when I came into the rabbi's office and sat down, he said, "The sermon next week is going to be about my trip to Toledo, and I want you to do research to show that El Greco was a Jew." I said, "But he wasn't a Jew." He said, "I want you to do the research to show that he was a Jew." Now, what do you do? I fudged it; I wrote a sermon in which I referred to the persistent rumors. I did research it, and there were all these rumors. I didn't go to the sermon. I didn't go to many of them, but that one I deliberately stayed away. I didn't want to hear what he was going to do with it. [laughter]

I did this work with my left hand, so to speak. I had a lot of time. Every now and then somebody would say, "Where have you been?" I'd say, "I had to do research for the sermon. I've been in Widener Library all this time." Well, it was true I was in Widener Library all that time, but I wasn't doing research for his sermon, I was reading. That year came and went and it became a joke, because I kind of lost respect for that rabbi; I didn't think he was very good. There he was, up there giving these brilliant sermons, and getting all of this acclaim—he lasted for a long time in Boston—and everybody was patting him on the back for this stuff that I had written. I didn't think he was a very good speaker at that.

I realized, at the end of the year, that this wasn't going to work. I had to find myself. I guess it was late spring or early summer, and we took a trip down to Baltimore to see my family, just to get away. We were sitting in the garden at my parent's house, and it was very nice, with lovely fruit trees and comfortable furniture. I don't know how, but a sort of germ had come into my mind. One of the people in graduate school at Hopkins when I was there was a man named Andy [Andrew H.] Horn. He got his Ph.D. at Hopkins in American history. He was a *cause célèbre* because he married the secretary of the history department. He met her when he came there as a graduate student, and they fell in love.

[Tape V, Side One]

EDELSTEIN: Well, he studied history, but then he decided that he wanted to be a librarian, and/or teach in library school, and he became Larry [Lawrence Clark] Powell's assistant at UCLA. After a year there, he went back to Virginia, where his mother was living; she was old or sick or both. He had married at some point and then they went back to California. I stayed in close touch and we became very close friends and remained so until he died. He played a very large part in my life in a number of ways, and in this way in particular. While Eleanor and I were sitting in the garden under a tree, I said something like, "Why don't I go to library school?" It was as if curtains parted or lighting struck; it just seemed so right. We talked about it endlessly from then on. What I was really interested in was books. When was I

happiest? I was happiest when I was holding a book. I wrote to Andy, or called him, or both, and asked him, "Where is the best place to go?" He said Michigan had the best library school in the country. Unfortunately, it didn't remain that way, but in those days it was. I had time left on my GI Bill. I got in. I think it happened overnight.

The next thing we knew, we were in a crummy apartment on N. Thayer Street [in Ann Arbor]. I didn't want to spend a lot of time, so I took a very accelerated course, so that I would finish in a year and a summer what was supposed to take two years, including two summers. I crammed it all in like mad. I hardly saw Eleanor. She was writing a book in that lousy apartment, and she was there all day typing away while I was at the university going to class, or studying in the library. I'd leave early in the morning and come back late at night.

SMITH: You went there with this depth of scholarship. You probably have more of a scholarly background than the average library school student.

EDELSTEIN: No question about it. I skimmed through it. I bought lots of books and did a phenomenal amount of reading. We didn't have much of a social life. We knew these people Henry Koch and his wife, whom I had known at Hopkins. He too was a graduate student at Hopkins, in medieval German history, and then like so many of us, he gave it up. We didn't know that we were going to be in Ann Arbor together. We spent a lot of time with them, we were very good friends. We're still

friends but we don't see each other or hear from each other very much. Zafren, from Hopkins, whom I mentioned before, was also there.

I became friendly with somebody I had not known before, John Parker, and his wife. He became a brilliant director of the James Ford Bell Collection. If you're interested in the period of exploration and discovery of the Americas that's the collection you have to see. It's one of the great collections in the world. So [John] and I saw each other in classes, and we'd have coffee and meals, but nobody had a real social life. We'd go out to the Koch's farmhouse and play with their kids, and that was the most fun we had, and I think we spent one weekend in Detroit. It was a cold, miserable winter, and it was just hard work. Even though it was hard work, as I say, I really just skimmed through it. The library school curriculum was not something to brag about, and I found it very easy, so I took tons and tons of classes. All I wanted to do was just get through. I had no idea where I was going to go or what I was going to do.

Then something happened—it was like that tree in Bolzano, in the Tyrol. One day there was a notice on the bulletin board. The Library of Congress had an internship program. You had to apply. You had to have a certain grade average, you know, all the usual things. They were offering a beginner's salary, and you would move through the Library of Congress. I and another fellow from the library school got the internships. I remained friends with him, Roger Trenens. Roger Trenens got

his degree at Michigan at the same time I did. So Eleanor and I packed up our things, drove back, and I remembered that drive. I remember the fierce heat at the end of that summer on the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Oh God, that Pennsylvania Turnpike was so miserable. I can just feel it. We set ourselves up in Washington, and I was at the Library of Congress.

It was an interesting year. The internship did just what it was supposed to do. It introduced the interns to every aspect of work in the Library of Congress, which is a great and wonderful place, as I'm sure you know. You would work in a month in one area and somebody would shepherd you around and introduce you to people. It was a marvelous experience, but I do remember the interns were sort of resented by the regular staff, because we were very privileged. We had the run of the place, we were being paid a nice stipend, we were treated very well, and we had the promise of a job at the end. It was certain that if we wanted to stay on at the Library of Congress we could, or if we wanted to go elsewhere there was no question that we would have a job, because it was a wonderful year of training.

This was early on in the history of the LC interns. In somewhat recent years the LC began to hit hard times and got a series of Librarians of Congress who were inadequate to say the least; it went down a bit and the internship program I think was suspended for two or three years. They've been resumed, and they're okay. But I was lucky enough to be there when they were really going very strong and people

took the training of this group of people very seriously. Somebody had had the vision, the foresight, and the thoughtfulness to establish this program. It wasn't intended that everybody who went through the internship would stay on at LC, but there was no question that you could have a very good job if you went through the internship successfully. It was rigorous; it wasn't a vacation by any means. You had to show up and you had to participate and you had to contribute to the unit that you were attached to for that particular month. I had a good year, I learned a lot about a complex and important institution, and I met many people.

When that year was over I was asked to stay on, and I was invited to become the assistant to Charles A. Goodrum, a really extraordinary man. He was the reference librarian for what was then called the Congressional Research Service. You know that by law, as the name would indicate, the Library of Congress is the library of the Congress of the United States. As time passed and things developed, it took on the role, not always willingly, of the national library of the United States. It's not used by the Congress the way it should be used, and for a long time its potential as the national library was hardly realized. There were many great librarians of Congress, and there were real nothings. It's a political appointment, so sometimes they've been good and wise and sometimes they've been abysmal. In any case, the training that I got was terrific, and I was asked to be the assistant to Goodrum. The Congressional Research Service was divided up into various areas: economics,

agriculture, history. It was a library within a library, and it still is. I think it's called something else now; they've made a variation in the name.

Goodrum was a particularly American type of phenomenon. He came from Kansas and he talked like a country hick. He was a sort of roly-poly fellow, but he was the one to teach the lesson that you don't judge somebody by what they look like or sound like. He's one of the brightest, most insightful, well-informed, wisest men I've ever met in my life, a marvelous man, very, very talented. He may be approaching eighty now, I don't know. He's a very good novelist. He's been writing novels since he retired, and they're wonderful. He wrote a history of the Library of Congress. I guess it's a coffee-table book, but it's extraordinarily well done. I think he's brilliant, but he conceals all this in this small town, country boy type of personality, this persona with which he faces the world.

So he was my boss, and as different as we were, we got along beautifully. I had an extraordinary and very enlightening year working with him. The job was a great education because you never knew what the day would bring. You never knew what kind of inquiry would come over from the Capitol, what some school kid in Wyoming had written to his Congressman to find out about. Naturally the Congressman couldn't be bothered, or any of his assistants, and they would shoot it over to us. In those days Sar Levitan was working there and then he moved on and he became professor of economics at Georgetown University. Then he was head of

all kinds of government commissions. He was a brilliant economist, and he worked on a lot of very important bills. There was a black man who was very interesting. I can't think of his name, but he became very important later in District of Columbia politics and made a big name for himself in the sixties with hunger strikes and all that sort of thing. So there were interesting people and it was a wonderful experience.

At the end of about a year there was a notice on a bulletin board about an opening in the Library for a reference librarian or assistant librarian, something like that, I can't remember precisely, in the Rare Book Division. I had a big debate with myself at that time because I knew of course that if I stayed where I was I would have a future. There would be promotions and I would be part of a very lively, active world of today; I would be responding to things happening in Congress. If I went to that other job I'd be going into a cloister; I'd be a little bit removed. It would be much more bookish and bibliophilic and bibliographic, everything that rare books, manuscripts, special collections connotes. For better or worse, I chose the latter path. I've had a good career in it, but that was a real turning point.

I went upstairs into that rare book room, and I spent something like eight years in there, working for Frederick Richmond Goff, who was chief of the division. He was a Rhode Islander, from Barrington. His mother and Eleanor's mother, it turned out, had some kind of schooling together. Freddy was a very interesting fellow. Not always likable. He was a little bit of a snob, he kept very much to

himself. He was also a poor teacher, but he was very good at his work. He was an incunabulist. I think he went to Brown. If he didn't go to Brown he had spent a lot of time there, working in the library for Margaret Bingham Stillwell, who was one of the great book people of the time. Somebody ought to do her biography. She was well ahead of her times and she studied incunabula. She was the director of the Ann Mary Brown Memorial, which has now been merged with the university library at Brown but then it was independent and had really important collections of incunabula and other things. So Freddy was a student and a disciple of hers, and also a student and a disciple of Lawrence Roth, the historian from Baltimore who wrote many interesting things about colonial printing. He was for many years director of the John Carter Brown Library, where I hang my hat from time to time now.

At that time Freddy was the editor of what is known as the *Third Census of Incunabula in America*. He was writing articles day after day on the history of fifteenth-century books, and he was very widely published. I had been in the Rare Book Division before of course, just to look it over, and I was in several times when I was being interviewed for the job. He said, "Well, it looks like you're made for this position." On my first day, I walked in, we shook hands, he said something like "Welcome. Your desk is over there." It was on the other side of the room from him, sort of semi-private, and that was it. That was it. He never told me what to do, how to do it, where, why, nothing.

SMITH: What did you do during your seven years in the rare book room?

EDELSTEIN: Everything, I did everything. But it was self-taught. But that's a form of pedagogy too. Some people think the way to teach a child how to swim is to throw him in the water, and that's what he did. There were other people around of course, and I asked questions, and I poked around and found my way about. I became the assistant chief of the Rare Book Division. When Freddy wasn't there I was the boss, and in certain areas even when he was there. He was a man who never varied his routine. At five minutes to twelve he put on his coat and went to lunch, and he was back at five after one, or whenever it was, and he ate the same thing every day in the same place, sitting in the same chair. He'd go and play bridge with the same group of people and he'd take the same vacation every year with the same group of people. But that was his lifestyle, and it was all right.

He came to our house a couple of times. He warmed up when he had a bourbon or two. He always liked the bourbon that we had. He and Eleanor would talk about Rhode Island, and he was all right. But he was a cool sort of fellow, we never became close friends. I discovered, accidentally and through third parties, that he had a very high opinion of me, which pleased me. I certainly had a high opinion of him as a scholar and a bibliographer, but I didn't think much of him as a person. I wanted someone warmer and friendlier, and somebody to talk to about our mutual work, but I didn't get that from Freddy. I got it from lots of other people at the

Library of Congress, in other departments. I was pretty happy there.

SMITH: But how did you decide what to do from day to day?

EDELSTEIN: Well, it forced itself upon me. There were readers to take care of, there were dealers to talk to, there were bibliographies to check, there were space conditions that had to be addressed, there were staff problems that had to be solved, all of these things. There were exhibitions to put up, and there were publications to write. Maybe I'm painting too black and white a picture. Freddy and I had lots of conversations. I think there were two doors to the stacks. I could go in either on my side or his side. When I passed his desk in his little semi-private cubicle, he'd say, "Listen, by the way. The copies of Evans haven't been annotated for a while. Maybe you ought to catch up." Or, "What is our next exhibit going to be?" And we'd talk and decide on an exhibit. The annual reports had to be written, and a lot of attention and care were given to them. They were always written over his name, and then one year, out of the blue, it was both our names. But he didn't say anything to me, he just did it.

Then I wanted to publish an article about some things which came to my attention in the rare book room holdings. It had to do with maritime history and saints. I saw some very interesting representations of St. Elmo's fire, and I made some interesting connections. The article was illustrated and it appeared in the *American Neptune*. I had given it to Freddy to read before I submitted it and he said,

"That's very nice, I like, it, but before you submit this for publication you really should show it to Lawrence Roth at the John Carter Brown Library. It's right up his alley, and he knows a lot about this kind of thing." Well, I was delighted to send it to Lawrence Roth. I had fears that it would come back blue-penciled all over. It did come back with some interesting suggestions, but all in all it was okay.

So there was communication between Freddy and I, but he was not a warm man. He was a good man and a good scholar and a good bibliographer. We went to his house a couple of times. He had a nice little house down by the Potomac River. I really made my own way, and I began, little by little to make a name for myself in bookish and in bibliographic circles. I became interested in professional library organizations. People would come to the Library to read and to study, and I met lots of people, many of whom became colleagues and friends, or both. We had a nice life in Washington. We moved out of Capitol Hill, to Georgetown. We rented a house on Q Street, almost at Wisconsin, and we were there a couple of years and then we bought a house on R Street, and our first child came. Both our boys are adopted. We couldn't have children of our own. I'm going to make a parenthesis in the story, if you're interested.

SMITH: Sure.

EDELSTEIN: I really don't know what the point of this interview is, so I don't know what's germane and what's not germane, but we couldn't have children. When we

were in Michigan, the University of Michigan Medical School was having one of those investigations into fertility. We wanted children from the time we got married, and we wanted to have children while we were young. Nothing happened and nothing happened, so we enrolled in this fertility program; it was just awful what you had to go through. Much later we discovered it was my fault. You know what happened? I forgot to tell you that when I was in the army I got the mumps, so it was late in life. It can have all kinds of serious consequences. The doctors, long after the fact, figured out that the reason Eleanor could not conceive was because when I had the mumps it affected my glands in such a way that we couldn't have children. So we adopted both boys, five years apart. Paul, our oldest one came along shortly after the death of my mother's brother, who I've told you about, and in the traditional way you name the first child to be born after a relative. Although I wasn't close to my uncle, he was my uncle, and one develops certain warmer feelings very often after a person's gone than you had before. In any case I had no objection.

Nathaniel came along later. And he was named Nathaniel just because we love the name. He doesn't. He's always changing his name, or shortening it or substituting something else for it. He thinks it's too long to write. Nathaniel Edelstein is quite a mouthful, I guess. In any case, these were good years. We bought this house on R Street, and it had a nice yard, and life was very pleasant, but I was getting bored.

SMITH: Before we go on, I have a few questions. What is involved in becoming a specialist in rare books? Did it mesh well with your previous interests?

EDELSTEIN: It meshed beautifully. What does it involve? You can go to library schools, or you can go to something like the rare book school that's run by Terry Bellinger at the University of Virginia, where you learn a lot of techniques and facts about the history of books and printing, paper and type, conservation techniques—all of which are very important. You can learn about protocols having to do with buying, and principles of book collection and the proper way to treat trustees, donors and friends of the library, and all of those things. But the world of rare book librarians, collectors, bibliographers, and bibliophiles has an element in it which is very difficult to describe and very difficult to quantify and qualify. There's something haphazard about it, something intangible. It has to do with a feeling for the book— I mean that in the most general sense—not just as a medium, but as an object. It has a lot to do with whether the person in question is a reader himself or herself, and the symbolic values that exist in this object, whether it's a codex, a scroll, or a cave painting. When you get the right combination of knowledge, experience, self motivation, and love for the material, then you have a good bookman, or book-person, as you have to say these days. I don't know if that answers your question.

SMITH: Not entirely, but that's okay. I'm not sure that it's something that can be answered just so. But at the end of your seven years at the Library of Congress you

felt like you were a bookperson.

EDELSTEIN: Oh, there was no question about it. I felt secure, I had made a name for myself, I had published a fair bit, and I was a frequent attendee at professional meetings. I became known as a bookperson in my own right, and I was somebody that people sought out to get answers to things. I was well known in the trade.

SMITH: What were the acquisition goals or priorities of the Rare Book Division at the Library of Congress at that time?

EDELSTEIN: Well, they were very broad, because it covers the universe; everything from a lock of hair from Lincoln's head to the great collection of illustrated books that Lessing J. Rosenwald donated, to Thomas Jefferson's library and notes. Everything from the most superficial kind of thing to the richest kinds of material.

SMITH: When you got there you didn't have the task of building from scratch, as you did later?

EDELSTEIN: No, I didn't have the task of building from scratch. My task was to build on the strengths that were there. I worked very closely with the Stern family from Chicago on the [Alfred Whital] Stern Lincoln collection. The Rosenwald collection was Freddy Goff's bailiwick, but I couldn't help but be closely involved many times with Lessing Rosenwald and his gifts to the Library of Congress. My relationship with the Rosenwalds continued when I was at the National Gallery. Rosenwald gave prints and drawings to the National Gallery, and books to the Library

of Congress. So, no, there were not new areas to build up.

I did make a contribution though, because Freddy was receptive to an idea I had to scour the main stacks of the Library for significant pieces of modern literature. I should say at this point, Richard, that there's always been and there remains to this day, a different kind of tension in my professional life. From the time I was a student at Johns Hopkins, I have had one foot planted in the area of Italian Renaissance studies, and the other foot was planted five hundred years later; fortunately, the distance and time were not correlated, so I could keep my balance.

[Tape V, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: So this tension, this duality, has been part of my make-up ever since, and it exists to this very day. It doesn't bother me, and I don't know that it bothers anybody else. While I was at the Library of Congress I did my bibliography of Thornton Wilder. Some time ago I had met Donald Gallup, who was the curator of American literature at the Beinecke [Rare Book and Manuscript] Library and professor of English at Yale. We became and remained good friends. I adored Thornton Wilder's work, and later met him and came to like him enormously, and I became very good friends with Isabel Wilder, his sister, who's still living, in a nursing home. It was Donald Gallup who suggested that I do this bibliography and that Yale would publish it. I did a lot of it on company time, so to speak, with Freddy's knowledge and encouragement. I spent a lot of time going up to New Haven and

working in the Wilder house, and in the Beinecke Library. Some years later I gave all the stuff that I put together to the Beinecke.

You know, the play *Our Town* can still move me almost to tears. It's one of the gauges that I use with people. Anybody who doesn't respond to *Our Town* is off my book, so to speak. A lot of people think it's maudlin, and I don't. I think it's brilliant and rich and deep and very moving. I think *The Skin of Our Teeth* too, is one of the most important contributions to American literature. So, how did I get on this subject? I've lost track of what I was saying.

SMITH: You were talking about one particular contribution you made at the Library of Congress, which was modern literature.

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, that's right. I said to Freddy at one time that I was discovering, as I wandered through the stacks, the first editions of many [modern classics], and he said, "By all means, do with them what you think is right." So I had masses of stuff transferred and found all kinds of goodies. Those were good times, and I "grew" in that job. I did very well. Freddy was pleased with me, the Library of Congress was pleased with me, but after a certain point there was nowhere to go.

SMITH: You must have begun to develop a network.

EDELSTEIN: Oh, yes. Absolutely, I traveled a lot. Freddy was generous. I traveled, I went to meetings, I met all kinds of people, and I saw dealers. I was constantly going up to New York, and the dealers would come to us. The Rare Book

Division of the Library of Congress had much more money in those days than it has now; now it has a pittance, which is not to the credit of the Library of Congress and the way they appropriate their money. It's true that they get a lot of gifts, as well they should, being the national library of the country, but you can only do so much that way, and they have missed opportunity after opportunity for getting things which belong there. In any case, in those days it was different, and all kinds of fascinating people came from all over the world, and I had plenty of opportunity to meet them. I'd go to professional association meetings, and I took a very active role in the proceedings and the work of the Bibliographical Society of America, and so on. I visited the Pierpont Morgan Library, and the Folger [Shakespeare Library]. So, yes, that was the beginning of my network.

In some ways you build a name for yourself, or an image, or a reputation, and that becomes something almost separate from yourself. When someone like our friend Tom [Thomas] Reese at the Getty thinks of me, I hope he sometimes thinks of me as Mel Edelstein, this guy with glasses and beard and so on, the person, but I suspect that when he thinks of me he thinks of the network that I represent. A lot of people are that way. They call, and write, they want to know who to see here and who to talk to there, and who's the best man to give appraisals. I know the answers to those kinds of questions, and the reputation that I have with colleagues and with people in the trade is something I'm very proud of.

Anyway, that's where all that started. I couldn't have been in a more central place for that than the Library of Congress. For so many people in so many different disciplines and areas of work, you have to be there. In those days I was everywhere. If there was a meeting in who knows where, I would go to it, because I was interested in making connections and learning, and the travel allowance was good; I never seemed to have a problem there. I don't think I went to Europe.

SMITH: You were not going to Europe during that decade?

EDELSTEIN: I don't think I went to Europe. I can't really remember, to tell you the truth. I may have gone once or twice, but I'm not sure now.

SMITH: Well, if you don't recall, that says that even if you did go, it wasn't an important part of your life at that time. Your life was focused in D.C.

EDELSTEIN: And I had a young family: Paul in 1956 and Nathaniel in 1961. But I belonged to committees and I went to meetings and conferences. There was the Bibliographical Society of America, and the Rare Book and Manuscript Division of the Association of College and Research Libraries, which was in turn a part of the American Library Association. They were all part of each other, but at the same time they were all rather distinct institutions with different agendas. I had met Robert Vosper at one of these meetings and we had come to like each other. At one point, later, I became president of the Rare Book and Manuscript Society for a year. I remember the annual meeting when I was president was in Philadelphia. There was

an opportunity to learn about that great institution concerning American history, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the Pennsylvania Historical Society, which were joined to each other. The wall between them had been taken down, and it was just unbelievably rich; it was so wonderful. I made good friends with Edwin Wolf, who was then the director and librarian—a great scholar. He had been a protégé of the legendary Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach of Philadelphia. So my worlds were enlarging and coalescing in a very nice way.

I remember attending a meeting of the Rare Book and Manuscript Society in Kansas City, and Bob Vosper asked me something like, "Where are you going from here?" Well, to make a long story short, he said, "Your future is with us." He told me about Franklin Murphy. I knew about Franklin Murphy because I had a very good friend named Joe Rubinstein, who was very important in my life. He and I were very close friends. I met him first when he lived in Tucson, Arizona. He had married a woman named Consuela, who was Mexican. You asked me before about tension between Jewish life and the other kinds of lives, and I hadn't ever thought about it until this very moment, but here was Joe Rubinstein, who came from the same kind of background that I did, who married this Catholic lady. God, she was beautiful. I wonder if she's still living . . . no, no, she died. They had a child, Raphael Rubinstein. "Raphey," he was called. They had a stormy marriage, real ups and downs and departures from each other, but we never talked about this kind of thing. We were

very close, but we never talked about that [feeling of tension]. I think for him, as for me, it was not a big deal. It didn't mean that much, because if it had we would have talked about it.

Joe was the rare book librarian at the University of Kansas when Bob Vosper was there and Franklin Murphy was the president or chancellor of the University. Joe Rubinstein was legendary. He was a big man, fat. He was his own worst enemy; he died because he didn't take care of himself. He smoked huge cigars. When he was offered the job at the University of Kansas, he said, "Yes, I'll take it, on one condition. I'm going to smoke at my desk here." Well, this is unheard of. He's the only one that I know of, anywhere, who got away with it. As I say, he died of those excesses. It's too bad; he smoked too much, he drank too much, he ate too much. Mostly ate too much. He was a sick man for a long time before he died. He wouldn't give up anything. Anyway, he left that job. He found working in an institution too confining. He went into business, became a rare book dealer, and then he moved to Berkeley, where he had gone to school. Then he really came into his element; he was just fantastic. He had a wonderful shop in San Francisco for a while.

So I knew about Vosper and I knew about Murphy, and I knew about UCLA, and Vosper invited me to come out there. I thought about it and Eleanor and I discussed it, and we thought, "This is great. The children are the right age." Nathaniel was a year old. Freddy Goff gave me his blessings; it was one of the

warmer times that we spent together. I remember that very well. He was different than he usually was, not so cool and removed. He wished me godspeed and all the rest, and we tore up our roots in Washington and left for California. From the minute I saw it, I just loved it. It was 1962, and in 1962 California was a very different place than it is now. You really felt that you were part of a people who were making a new life. There was still a frontier kind of mentality and atmosphere. I was taken up immediately into the circle of bookmen personified by Jake Zeitlin and his close friend Grant Dahlstrom, and Glen and Muir Dawson; it was marvelous. Bob Vosper was the librarian and Franklin Murphy was the chancellor, and Larry Powell was still around.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you if Vosper represented a continuation of the Powell legacy.

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, absolutely. Even with the same folksy way of talking. And Andy Horn was there. I had this fantastic circle of friends, immediately.

SMITH: And your job was to build up their Renaissance collection.

EDELSTEIN: I became the medieval and Renaissance bibliographer. I made a big splash immediately. I started to put out the bulletin about acquisitions, which was a big success. It seemed so obvious. Anyway, somebody had to do it, and I came there at just the right moment. If it had sold it would have been wonderful, but it was sent out as a library publication. Did I say that I wrote a lot of stuff for the Library of

Congress while I was there?

SMITH: No, you didn't mention that.

EDELSTEIN: I did a lot of writing for the Rare Book Division, and the Library as a whole, and that was nice. Talk about building networks, I mean, that's how your name gets known.

SMITH: So were you housed in the Department of Special Collections?

EDELSTEIN: No, that was totally different.

SMITH: You were with the bibliographers?

EDELSTEIN: With the bibliographers, yes. When I came in 1962 everything was still in the Powell Library. The Undergraduate Research Library was still being planned; it had not gone up yet. So it was a close network there, and I was immediately a part of it. We knew all these people and we had a nice house to live in, and Eleanor was very happy. She took to California. The minute she got off the airplane and saw a palm tree, that was it. Two wonderful years went by.

I did a lot of traveling during those two years. I went to Europe, I was going back to the east coast quite a lot for meetings and one thing or another. New York in those days was everything. California, whatever it was, was not New York. I met a man named Charles [Francis] Gosnell, who was the librarian of NYU, and he offered me the world and New York. He said, "Oh God, if we had somebody like you to take charge we wouldn't be in such a mess. We've got all these rich donors and we don't

know what to do with them. We don't have anybody who knows how to talk to them. We've got all this money." I was seduced by this, and I threw it all up and we came back east. Sometimes I think Eleanor should have been stronger; she should have said no. Maybe she was too good a wife, in a sense. You know, it was my career. She always had things to do, a lot of writing, and young children. Anyway, we uprooted ourselves again.

SMITH: It was a big promotion, right?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, I was the head of everything in terms of special collections at NYU. We had a lovely house down in Santa Monica canyon, and as far as I know the children were happy. I know that Eleanor was happy. But I was restless, and I was seduced, and it was New York, it was Washington Square, you know, it was glamorous. In hindsight I think it was foolish, because it didn't work out. Eleanor was unhappy. She'd never liked New York, and she didn't like it then. We had a wonderful apartment in Greenwich Village. Do you know the Sullivan MacDougal Gardens?

SMITH: Where is it located?

EDELSTEIN: Well, picture in your mind's eye, a city block bounded on the north by Bleecker Street, on the south by Houston Street, on the east by Sullivan Street, and on the west by MacDougal Street. To the north was the Café Figaro—bohemians. This was long before hippies and rock stars and all that stuff. There were drunks,

plenty of drunks all right, but it was still the "Village." Then, on these two long side streets, MacDougal and Sullivan, there were flat front brownstones, four storeys high. Beautiful. Back in the 1920s the owners of those brownstones did a wonderful thing. They got together and they merged the back yards so that each house had its own small back yard, but beyond that was a communal oval garden yard that ran the length of the city block. The backs of the Bleecker and Houston Street houses were excluded, but that still left a very long block. When we got to New York, we took a room in the Earl Hotel, a flea bag just off of Washington Square, and got the newspaper and looked at the classified ads, and boom! there it was. For $400, which was an enormous amount of money for us in 1962, somehow or other we swung it.

I don't know how we did it, but we managed, we got this apartment. A Mrs. Norton owned the house, and she lived on the first and second floor. We had the third and fourth floor, and a balcony overlooking the garden. We had storage space in the cellar. Nobody could get to the garden except by going through the houses. It was just wonderful. In the wintertime they'd flood the center part for ice skating, and there were hours when children could play and when they could not play, and it was just marvelous. We made good friends, some of whom last to this day.

Mrs. Norton was wacky, a very moody woman. One day, she said to me, "I don't want to live here anymore. Do you want to buy this house?" And I said, "Yes, how much is it?" And she said something like, $80,000. Whatever it was, we didn't

have it. It was the most serious mistake in my life. Half of one of those houses recently sold for $2,500,000. Half! So we had these two years, but they were not happy. Eleanor didn't like New York. Even though New York was very different then than it is now, it still wasn't clean. There were a lot of drunks around, and every now and then we'd find one in the cellar, or on the front steps. Eleanor had to trudge down two flights of steps with the groceries and with the children, and take the children to Washington Square to play. Sometimes that was good and sometimes it wasn't good. There was the winter weather and New York traffic, and she didn't like it. She felt imprisoned there. I don't think the children did very well there, although my memories are weak on that. I wasn't as observant of the children as I should have been at that time.

Things at the university did not work out as promised. It was nobody's fault but mine; I simply didn't investigate enough. Charles Gosnell didn't lie about anything; he just neglected to tell me the full truth, and after a while I found him not terribly compatible. His principal interest was the history of freemasonry. I'm all for freemasonry, I think it's been an extremely interesting movement, but I'm not interested beyond that. He wanted to recruit me to the Freemasons, and I wasn't interested. He had attained the highest degree of masonry, and he was the archivist of the chapter in New York, which is one of the most important chapters in the world. That was his principal intellectual and social interest, and it sort of left me cold.

He really left me on my own with all these donors that he'd talked about, and it really boiled down to one: Commodore Fales. He was called Commodore because he was Commodore of the New York Yacht Club. He had one of the great yachts of all time and was a great seaman. So, that was something to talk about with him because he knew my father-in-law and he knew the Herreshoff boat yards, and he knew Bristol. Anybody who had anything to do with boating and yachting had a connection to Bristol, because of the Herreshoff yards and the spectacular boats that they built; certainly among the most beautiful boats ever built anywhere. So he was very pleased to see me because as distant and as tenuous as it was in some ways, there was this connection and he liked that. My principal job there was to keep him happy.

He had already made some terrific benefactions to the collections at NYU. As a matter of fact, his collections are really the mainstay of the special collections department. They were right up my alley and I had a marvelous time with them because he was interested in literature. He was very well informed, he was more than just a yachtsman. He was a very successful financier of some highfalutin type that I had no idea about, but I knew he was very rich and he had this beautiful house on 72nd street just off of Lexington. He occupied the whole house, and it was filled with gorgeous things. He lived very well, so he was no fly-by-night in any sense of the word, and he knew as much about literature and books and learning as he did about

yachting and finance. But he was an old man, and he liked to talk, and he liked to be buttered up. He liked things his way. Well, his way was this: whenever he felt like talking I would be summoned.

Two or three times a week I had to have lunch with him, and it was a ritual. Sometimes it was at the Players' Club in Gramercy Park in New York, which is a very important cultural institution; it and the National Arts Club are next door to each other on Gramercy Park South. It's played a significant role in the history of American literature and theater, or in the arts in general. The first couple of times of course I was thrilled to be there and have lunch there, but the thrill palled very quickly after doing this for almost two years. His idea was to call me up and say, "We've got a lot to talk about. Such and such material is coming up for auction and maybe I ought to buy it for the collections." Or, "You've got to tell me what you're doing with the Hemingway manuscripts," and so on. He just wanted to talk; he wanted company. So I'd have to get on the subway and go up to his house, and we'd sit around and talk.

A man named Dave Kirshenbaum was always there, Commodore Fales's favorite dealer in New York. He never did anything without Dave's advice, and he never bid on a book or bought a book even from another dealer without having Dave as his go-between. This used to irritate the hell out of me, because I had all sorts of ways of saving him money and doing things differently, not only differently, but

better. Dave Kirshenbaum was a perfectly wonderful man, and straight as an arrow, but totally unnecessary. Dave would always put his oar in, and he had his own ideas, some of which were self-aggrandizement—not in a bad way, but I thought he was unnecessary and interfering. Of course Dave knew which side the bread was buttered on. Anything the Commodore wanted, he got, and anything he said was right.

So lunch was either at the Players' Club or Dino's Restaurant on Lexington Avenue, just across from Bloomingdale's, between 60th and 61st streets; it's still there. Ed Sullivan was always in there, eating by himself. He had his own table, and he had lunch there, every single day. That was the best part of it, I could tell people I'd seen Ed Sullivan. He and Commodore Fales would talk to each other, but he never came over, and I was never introduced to him. Commodore Fales, being of the same generation and the same kind of interests and background as my father-in-law, always had to have a drink. I didn't want a drink. If I had a drink I was always sorry; it made me sleepy or tipsy or both, but I went along with this. I was gaining weight and all of those things; it just wasn't my kind of thing. Then the meals seemed to get bigger. It just went on and on and on, the talk got more and more useless, and my advice wasn't always being taken.

Fales was a good man, and he was nobody's fool. He was very bright and he knew his stuff. He was as astute and as learned in literary ways as he was in others, and his gifts to NYU were spectacular. So that's one of the great collections there,

thanks to him, and to me. Every now and then I'd find in a shop, or a catalog, or through one connection or another, some other material, and I had a lot of trouble with Gosnell about it. He'd say, "Get Commodore Fales to buy it." I'd say, "Listen, we've got to learn to stand on our own feet. You can raise the money." Sometimes he did and sometimes he didn't. He wasn't a very good librarian, administrator, or anything else. He also drank too much. He and Fales would get together and drink each other under the table. So I was beginning to get very antsy about that.

The other donor, Leslie Frost, daughter of Robert Frost, was very difficult, but in different ways. She had promised all of her stuff to NYU, and it was my job to go over to her place. She lived rather close by, in the Village, where W. H. Auden lived, and one nice by-product was that I got to see Auden a fair bit in his New York days, before he permanently moved over to Austria.

[Tape VI, Side One]

SMITH: You were saying that Eleanor studied with Auden?

EDELSTEIN: Eleanor studied with Auden when she was a student at Bennington, and she had wonderful Auden stories. I saw him through Bob Wilson, who was the owner of the Phoenix Bookshop. He was one of Auden's best friends and the executor of his literary estate.

But Leslie Frost was a very difficult woman. She was generous to NYU, and that's all very nice, but dealing with her was a problem; you had to drag it out of her,

and she was very demanding. I think she was very much like her father, not very nice. I got to know Robert Frost a little bit through her, and he was not this sweet old man, the image that's projected about him. He was a cantankerous, mean person. He could be very vindictive, and not very nice to young poets at all. He had very dark, dark moods, and it comes out in a lot of his poetry, if you really read it. All that talk about woods. Woods can be very dark and menacing.

During those two years in New York, there were several bright spots, but not for Eleanor, unfortunately. I don't think there were any bright spots for her, and this of course made things difficult at home, and that was not good for either one of us and not good for our children. Eleanor really hated it; there were just no two ways about it. And she still does. She resists going to New York for any reason whatsoever. But I had more of a life outside the house than she did. One thing that both of us had in common were the neighbors and the friends that we made in the garden. Our best friend, Connie Bessy, has died; she was a wonderful woman. We were very close to her and saw a lot of her. Our other friends were Ira and Alden Cohen. Ira has died, but Alden Cohen, his widow, still lives in the same house there. Just before Ira died they sold half of the house. They got all that money for just half the house. The house next door to us belonged to Alexander Calder, the sculptor. His daughter went to Bennington with Eleanor. So we'd see Calder from time to time; he'd come to visit his daughter and his grandchildren. Across the garden on the

same side where the Cohens lived was Edgard Varèse, the composer. So there were a lot of interesting people there. So that aspect of it was good, and in addition to that, I was out and I had the university and I had New York. I felt very close to New York because of that year I had spent in the army out there at CCNY. I knew a lot of the city. I spent a lot of time in that city, and probably left Eleanor and the children alone far too long.

Probably every evening I was in the Phoenix Bookshop, which was very near by on Cornelius Street, just over Sixth Avenue from where we were, which was run by Robert Wilson. He's since retired and he lives near St. Michael's on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It was more than a bookstore; it was a hangout. Everybody hung out there, and I met poets and writers and dancers; this was between '62 and '64. So it wasn't the sixties that we think of with its revolutionary aspects and the hippies and all that kind of thing yet, but things were beginning to bubble. I met everybody under the sun. One of the people who was in there all the time, was Leroi Jones, as he was then called. He became Amiri Baraka later. Denise Levertov was there, and Black Mountain College people would come up to New York.

SMITH: Is this when you began your collecting of small press material?

EDELSTEIN: No, I began that earlier. Actually, I skipped something very important, and I want to go back to it if it's okay.

SMITH: Sure.

EDELSTEIN: While I was at the Library of Congress I went to every poetry reading there was, good, bad, indifferent, and I met a lot of people. One of the poets I met was O. B. Hardison, who became the director of the Folger Library. He was also one of the most eminent scholars of Elizabethan literature that we've ever had in America. Unfortunately he too is now dead. I had made little forays into English literature, and I had this wonderful experience in high school with my teacher, Mr. Pentz, in English literature, but I really felt that I had missed out on a lot, and it was thanks to O. B. that windows opened up that I hadn't even approached before.

Sometime during the late fifties a man named Jonathan Williams came to live in Washington for a few months to try to promote his books, and we met. He was a Black Mountain College product. I can't remember how I first heard of him or knew of him, to tell you the truth. Jonathan is one of the great men that I know, and I've known a lot of them. I've been very lucky. Like a lot of great men he can be disturbing to say the least, and a real pain in the ass. He's very self-centered. I think maybe they have to be, to become great, in some ways. I'm doing a book about Jonathan and his press, which is called Jargon. Everything has a life and death of its own and I think wise people come to realize that, and I think Jonathan should stop doing what he's doing and maybe do something else, or maybe do nothing for a while. But in its heyday, from the mid-fifties until fairly recently the Jargon imprint, under Jonathan's direction, has been synonymous with what is avant-garde in American

literature, particularly American poetry. It has a board of advisers and a board of directors, and I've been a member of one or other of those boards almost since the time I met Jonathan. I'm not a member of either one right now, but I'm the official bibliographer of Jargon. Sooner or later I'll finish this work that I'm doing about Jonathan and his books. Jay [James] Laughlin, the founder and director of New Directions, which in itself is generally considered synonymous with the literary avant-garde, said somewhere, "When I want to find out what's new I look at Jargon." Which is pretty high praise, huh?

So Jonathan and I became friends almost immediately when we met. He was living on Capitol Hill in an apartment, trying to promote Kenneth Patchen. Jonathan takes on causes, and he devotes himself to them, very often to the detriment of his own work and to that of Jargon. He's an interesting poet himself, but I think it sometimes gets in the way of other things. I think his most important role is as publisher and director of Jargon; he is a man who, somehow or another, has these incredible antennae, so that he can sense what's new and different. He's very strange about it; he totally rejects anything which is brought to his attention. He's very selfish in that way. If he doesn't discover it for himself, it remains undiscovered, no matter who you are and how well qualified you are to judge and bring it to his attention. Which is not good, and he's been told this by many, many people, but that didn't change him. His great contribution is this fantastic ability he has, and it's not only in

terms of literature. He knows all the baseball box scores and he can spot a raw talent just as he can spot a great work of art. He has a fantastic collection of Appalachian folk art—really superb stuff.

He spends a lot of time on his own poetry, which takes up so little intellectual space, in a way, and the theme is so specialized; it's the world of the homosexual poet. It's no secret that Jonathan is homosexual. He's had two marriages, so to speak, with two interesting men. The first was Ronald Johnson, who is a great poet himself, and they split up twenty some years ago. Thomas Meyer, also a poet, is living with him. I don't think he's a great poet, but Jonathan thinks he is. He's too scholarly, actually, that's his problem. He knows too much about myth and folklore, and there's too much scholarship in his work, rather than art. There are a lot of people like that. But he's very, very nice. Ronald Johnson is not only one of the important poets of our time in America, but he's also one of the great cooks, and Tom Meyer's not bad either; I guess this is one of the things that Jonathan looks for in his companions. Ronald has published some fantastic cookbooks. They're not only wonderful recipes, but they are beautifully written, and I think a good many of them are published by Knopf; they are very handsome books.

Jonathan, his work, and the Jargon society have occupied a big place in my life since we met. I've spent a lot of time with Jonathan, helping him, doing the things that a member of the board does—always trying to raise money. When I was a

member of the board, I, along with people who knew a great deal more about the financial situation than I did, told him the society would be better off if we just gave the books away instead of trying to sell them. We printed these small editions and they never sold. A handful of people bought them, just like the handful of people who buy poetry. Poetry is published as window dressing for the big publishers; it's a prestige kind of thing to the name of a publishing house. So the society would really be better to declare itself a kind of charity, whatever the laws would allow it to do, and give the stuff away, we'd be much better off.

SMITH: It wasn't always that way. I think particularly in the 50s and 60s poetry sold at a much greater level than it does now.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, yes it did, that's true. But not Jargon. The first time that a Jargon book made money was when it published a cookbook, by that Mississippi fellow; that was the first and only time. But Jargon published Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, Denise Levertov, Paul Metcalf (one of the really important, underappreciated writers of our time), Charles Olson, Joel Oppenheimer—you know, remarkable stuff. Jargon published their first books, you see.

SMITH: But the first three that you name I know went over to New Directions.

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, they were picked up later. New Directions has big distribution. In the early years Jargon was done out of the back of Jonathan Williams's station wagon. That's how he distributed them. He drove around the

country in his station wagon, gave readings, and after the readings he said, "Here are the books, they're for sale." You know, that kind of thing. Although it's a little more sophisticated now, it doesn't sell. Some of the photography stuff and the stuff on Appalachian folklorists sells, but he spends most of his time raising money.

Jonathan lives half the year in North Carolina, in a beautiful place called Highlands, way in the southwest corner of the state, near the Georgia border. The other half of the year he lives in the Yorkshire Dales, in England. One of the things that has kept him and Jargon going is that he has been lucky over the years to have patrons. For a long time, in North Carolina, Philip Hanes, of the Hanes underwear and women's stockings family was a great patron of Jonathan's.

Hanes was succeeded as a patron by Donald Anderson, the brother of Robert Anderson, who was secretary of the treasury at one time. The family founded ARCO. Don Anderson and Robert Anderson have separate fortunes. Donald is not in Robert's class, but he's still a multi, multi millionaire. He started the artist's colony and museum in Roswell, New Mexico. This house I spoke of in the Yorkshire Dales belongs to Don. He said to Jonathan and to Tom Meyer, "Look, I want a place in England where I can come with my family and we can walk"—he's a great walker and hiker—"so you go find it. I'll pay the bills." It's a sixteenth-century stone cottage, which looks like a sheepherder's cottage when you see it from the outside, but when you go inside it is luxurious. It even has a sauna. It's wonderful. They've built on it

and fixed it all up, and now they have two cottages, because Don has a big family. Donald Anderson is a very nice man.

So, I back-tracked because of that, but it played a very, very large part in my life. When I retired from the Getty I was going to come back and we were going to live here and I've got a lot of work to do, but I got this invitation from Brown and it seemed so attractive to have an institutional affiliation. When Norman Fiering, the director, said, "Well, you're going to come back and live in Bristol, Rhode Island, anyway, and Providence is fifteen miles away." Having a university affiliation opens a lot of doors, and you have a card to identify you. You can go here and there, and have the run of the campus, the university library, the swimming pool, all those kinds of things. So I said yes. And then a second offer came to teach a course next semester. I should have turned that down, because it means so much work, but I've learned a lot, and I really feel that I ought to share some of it with younger people. So I'm developing this course on the history of the book. I've become much more interested in things like reception theory and the history of reading, and I'll mix all that in. It's an interesting group that I've become associated with at the university. And then of course I've got this year's consultantship to the Getty still, and that will take up some time.

There are really three things that remain uncompleted, and I've got to get to them. I have an obligation to myself, and I have a particular obligation to the

Guggenheim, because years ago, before I left the National Gallery of Art, I got a Guggenheim grant to do a book about Harry Duncan and the Cummington Press, and I've never finished it. I think about it all the time; I have this ethical obligation, in addition to which I think I have something to say. Don Tansel, the vice-president of the Guggenheim Foundation, says with a certain amount of amusement in his voice that I'm in very good company, that a lot of people they have given grants to have never finished the work they said they were going to do. But that's no solace or consolation.

Harry Duncan is I think one of the most important figures in the tale of American twentieth-century literature, poetry especially, combined with his magnificent skill and eye as a typographer and a printer. He has probably put out some of the most beautiful books that we have. He doesn't just reprint the Song of Songs, or the Declaration of Independence, as so many of our fine printers do. Every single one of his books is the discovery of an interesting and sometimes great and important talent. He has a spectacular ability to spot new talent, the kind of thing that Jonathan has, without the avant garde element. Harry Duncan's taste is a little more traditional, shall I say, but nonetheless important. He and his disciples don't print books unless they are of interesting new writers, or new literature. This is what makes Harry and the Cummington Press and all the other ones that he has spawned so interesting, and I think it's a story that needs to be told. Everybody agrees with me,

and I have far too many people urging me to finish this book, which I have got to do. So I don't know why I have taken on all these other things.

So that's Harry and I've got to finish this book about Jonathan. Aside from anything else, people are waiting for these books, so I won't have any trouble finding publishers or distributors, and I probably could make some money, which, God knows, we certainly need at this point in our lives. And then, to stand on the other foot that I've always stood on, with respect to the tension—I like this word that you introduced—there is another long-standing project that I've yet to complete, which involves a man that I've been interested in for years, a late fifteenth-century Florentine figure named Vespasiano da Bisticci. Have you ever heard of him?

SMITH: No.

EDELSTEIN: Well, there's no reason why you should have. Vespasiano da Bisticci was a very influential figure in late fifteenth-century Florence. He was by profession a scribe and an illuminator. He had a bookshop and stationary shop as they often were combined in Florence, and his shop was a hangout. In the same way that I hung out at the Phoenix Bookshop in New York in the sixties, people hung out at Vespasiano da Bisticci's shop just behind the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence in the second half of the fifteenth century. These were people like Cosimo de' Medici and Leonardo de' Medici and the guy who became Pope Nicolas V. The Emperor Corvinus would come down from Budapest. They all came to find out what was the latest book that

the Greek scholars had brought over, or that somebody had found and unearthed, and what new manuscript he had that was available for copying, or they would want a manuscript illuminated.

Philosophers, kings, popes, cardinals, politicians, wool merchants—everybody hung out in Vespasiano's shop, you see, and they would talk about the new humanistic discoveries. He was the man who formed great libraries, which are great today. He formed the library that Cosimo de' Medici put together. He formed the library that Lorenzo put together, which is now the Lorenziana in Florence, part of which was designed by Michelangelo—that great stairway. And he formed the great library of the Duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro, which was plundered later by the Vatican and is now part of the Vatican Library. In addition to all of that, he wrote a very important book sketching the lives of his illustrious contemporaries. It was a very self-serving book. He told lots of lies to illustrate how important he was in their lives, how he advised them in all of their activities, how friendly he was with every one of them, and how he formed these great libraries. Much of which was true, much of which was also exaggerated.

Now, this is a book which really was not known. Fragments had been known ever since he wrote it, but it really wasn't known until it was discovered by Jacob Burckhardt in manuscript form in the Vatican Library in the late nineteenth century, just before Burckhardt wrote his great *Civilization of the Renaissance*. Since then,

thanks to its own merits as well as to the highly significant role it plays in Burckhardt's book, the memoria of Vespasiano da Bisticci remain to this very day one of the primary sources for the theory of the Renaissance in Italy, especially Florence. This is a story that everybody knows, but believe it or not, it has never been written down. The only biography that exists of Vespasiano was written many years ago by some cleric. It's in Italian, it's never been translated, and it's not very good. It leaves out an awful lot, and it's a very dull book. A lot of Vespasiano material is now available in the state archives in Florence and in the Vatican.

Vespasiano employed the best illuminators and the best scribes and he had a very important influence on the development of printing—a negative influence, but sometimes negative influences are just as significant to remark upon as positive ones. Here you have the city of Florence, which was avant-garde in so many ways with respect to art. Everything from double-entry bookkeeping to art and architecture and commerce and wool manufacturing. When you think of the Italian Renaissance, you think of Florence first of all, in every respect but printing. Everywhere else in Italy, printing had taken off like a rocket. Well, the reason it didn't in Florence is that it was held back by people like Vespasiano da Bisticci. He wasn't the only scribe and illuminator, but he was the foremost. It was a matter of pure commerce. Printing was the death knell to their scriptoria. Who was going to commission a magnificent manuscript when you could buy one of these books that looked just as good? The

point of the early printers was to make their books look as much like the manuscript as possible; that was the whole idea. The early books were almost as expensive as manuscripts, to be sure, but they could see the writing on the wall, or the print on the page, as it were, and knew that sooner or later this was going to put them out of business and they tried to make it as "later" as possible and they succeeded. Vespasiano died in 1497, and he left the business, because he could feel the hot breath of the printers on the back of his neck, and the competition was beginning to get keen. But it wasn't until very, very late in the fifteenth century, unlike the rest of Italy, that Florence began to produce printed books in quantity and quality.

I have been bickering with Marsilio, an Italian publishing house in Venice and in New York. They still haven't come up with a contract like they should. I think if they don't come up with it I could get somebody else to do it, because everybody's interested in the story. So I ought to do this , and I have a lot of encouragement. Do you know Luigi Ballerini, at UCLA? He's the chairman of the Italian department.

SMITH: No.

EDELSTEIN: He's one of the directors of the Marsilio publishing house. It's run in New York by Umberto Eco's son. They're not very efficient, but I keep being urged by those people to do something about this book. We want to put out an *en face* edition; you know, Italian on one side and English on the other, a selection from the memoria. It's only been published once in English, and that was a long, long time

ago, 1909, so the English is quite antiquated.

SMITH: That sounds like something that the Getty could publish.

EDELSTEIN: It could be. I never talked to them about it, I don't know.

SMITH: So you have these three projects.

EDELSTEIN: I have these three projects, and I'm not doing a damn thing.

SMITH: They also seem like the summation of your career.

EDELSTEIN: They are, very much so. I haven't thought about it that way, but I suppose they are.

SMITH: They draw on things that have been concerning you for many years.

EDELSTEIN: Many years, yes. There are these other little side things, like these postcards; they're just for my amusement. I never thought I would have a hobby. I always used to laugh at people who had hobbies.

SMITH: Naturally people at the Getty said, "You have to ask him about his post-card collection."

EDELSTEIN: Do you want to hear about it now?

SMITH: Actually, I want to pursue some other things, and maybe get back to New York in '66, and your decision that you had to get out of there.

EDELSTEIN: Right, there we were in New York—God, I sort of forgot about that for a moment. That's right, I left Washington in '62, went to UCLA, then left to go back to New York, because I'm convinced it's not the right thing to do, but—

SMITH: It sounds like the extra-university, extra-family life in New York was very rich for you.

EDELSTEIN: Not the university, but New York was.

SMITH: Richer than what Los Angeles had to offer you.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, in some ways it was. Los Angeles had a lot to offer me in terms of pure academic material, the book world in the strictest sense, in the bibliographic and the bibliophilic sense. What New York offered me was a real connection with the literary life, with people who created people.

SMITH: Of course there was a literary life in California at that time; did you have connections?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, I had, but not in as immediate a way as I did in New York.

[Tape VI, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: New York was alive. It was not just literary life. There was film, theater, and dance groups. Everything passed through the Village and everything passed through Bob Wilson's bookshop or St. Mark's Playhouse—it was rich. But I knew that it wouldn't last and when you come right down to it, I was a bystander. I was a good audience, and art needs an audience. If you don't hear the tree fall, then you can't say anything about it. So it was good in that respect, and I gained a lot from it.

SMITH: So you returned to L. A., fortunately.

EDELSTEIN: I return thanks to the effort of three people: Andy Horn, Bob Vosper, and Franklin Murphy.

SMITH: Well, Franklin was the Chancellor.

EDELSTEIN: But I didn't go directly to him, but in the end he made it possible for Bob Vosper and Andy to get what they wanted, and what they wanted was to get me back, because I pounded on them.

SMITH: You told them you had made a mistake.

EDELSTEIN: I said I made a mistake. And they said they'd do everything they could. It took a year. I asked them at the end of the first year. You know, jobs weren't sitting around waiting just for me. There had to be an opening, and money.

SMITH: You stayed at UCLA almost a decade, minus the two years. UCLA is a library that was built virtually from nothing in the course of a generation. For my interests it is one of the best libraries in the country.

EDELSTEIN: Right.

SMITH: I was wondering, from your perspective, what were the factors that were making the UCLA library go in the direction that it was going, so that it wasn't a typical university library?

EDELSTEIN: Well, you know, the answer to that is very simple. I strongly believe, and there are many people who share my belief, that libraries are built by people. They are not built by committees, and they are not built by rules, whether they are

arbitrary or fixed rules. You cannot draw up a set of directions on how to build a library. You can write down what you've learned, certain basic things that one needs to do, but these things are not really much more complex than anything common sense would tell you. The answer to your question is not unlike the answer to your question about what makes a good rare book librarian. If you think of the great libraries that exist, they have been made by a combination of circumstances which have been facilitated by having the right people in place. You can build a great library if you have an infinite amount of time, by buying a book here, a book there, a manuscript here, a manuscript there, but you really have to operate in infinite terms to do it that way.

The great libraries are built by buying or acquiring—acquiring is a generic term which covers anything. You gather, you recognize, you find, you acquire, through gift, exchange, purchase—whatever the word "acquire" covers—what somebody else has already collected. If you think in your mind of all the great university, research, or private libraries that you know, that's the way they've been built. Mr. Folger comes along, with his collection of sixty-two folios, and somebody has the astuteness to start building a library from it. I've forgotten the name of that wonderful first director of the Folger Library, who preceded O. B. Hardison. He recognized what was there and its potential, got it and then put it in order. The ordering of a library, the way that you put it on a shelf and make it available to

scholarship, is a very, very important part of the process of the creation of a library. First you recognize the potential, convince somebody that it belongs to the world and shouldn't be dispersed or junked, but should be there where it can blossom. All of those things are part of the picture.

Afterwards, one must know how to really make that access a reality. I'm not talking about the fine tuning of cataloging or anything like that. There are technicians that handle that sort of thing. I don't mean to decry their work; there are technicians in every discipline and they're very important. But that's in a sense a detail. I don't feel that any aspect of the work of librarianship or any archival discipline, even if it's just pasting labels on or stamping due dates in the book that you get in the public library, is something to be sneered at; these are respectable and important professions and occupations and they have their place. But we are talking about something else, in that I'm limiting my remarks to the acquisition of materials and to how you're going to, in a sense, display them.

You may decide not to buy a magnificent collection because at a given time you don't have the space for it, or at a given time you don't have the staff that has to process it. There are two schools of thought about this in the library world. In some ways, the people who are at the top and who make these decisions in the library world have too much to say about it, because sometimes if you leave this kind of thing to an educated layman you get a better answer. If the person in charge is of the

school that believes every book you have should be processed and on the shelf and in order as soon as possible, and/or all the time, you may have a great library in terms of what it already has, but you have a library that grows slowly and has an unlimited limited future in store for it, if you know what I mean.

If you have a librarian who is more adventurous, and maybe not quite so focused on the problems of processing and storage, and is willing to bet on the future, assuming that money is not the question, then you have someone who is willing to say, "We'll never have an opportunity like this again. So what if this collection stays in storage for ten years?" Even if the collection wasn't fully available, maybe it could be put online, and you would have the bookseller's description, which can't always be trusted, but it's better than nothing. If somebody who was an expert in the field of that collection came in, they would know whether the bookseller's description was good enough, and they would be able to find what they wanted in that unprocessed collection, because they would know the material. They would be overjoyed to have that collection, because they would recognize its potential. So that's a different attitude. I'm sure you can tell by the level of my voice that it's an attitude that I have, but it's not embraced by everybody. I would have to say that one position is as often voiced as the other. There are many libraries which operate according to the first school of thought I described, and they are important institutions of learning, of research and of scholarship, but somehow I find that they

lack a certain élan, a certain excitement and spirit.

SMITH: But libraries, and I'm thinking of the UCLA library in particular, can switch from one to the other in a matter of a few years.

EDELSTEIN: Absolutely, and it has, as you know. As you know, we live in our own history, and we reflect our times, so a lot of it is a function of the times that we live in. I believe that greatness lies in recognizing that, but not necessarily lying down and totally accepting it. If you don't have the money, and UCLA does not have the money to do what it did in the glory days, there are other ways of acquiring material. But you've got to concentrate on it, you can't just have a biannual "friends" meeting and send out a flyer and hope that the good people of this world will search their shelves for the odd book to give, or drop $200 into the friends' group as an annual contribution. You've got to assertively and aggressively go out and do something about it. It takes a lot of work.

It's much easier if you have the money. People in the trade are not stupid; collectors' organizations and private people know what's going on, and they know where the money is. My popularity at the Getty was not based solely, if at all, on my lovely disposition and pleasing personality. I represented the Getty. I'm sure a lot of people came to me who may have hated my guts for some reason, but they knew that I controlled a big budget. But I'm talking about what a librarian who is in straitened circumstances can do if he or she is imaginative and creative. If times are bad, one

can create all kinds of programs that bring a sparkle to the library, even without spectacular acquisitions.

Nothing should ever stand in the way of exhibitions which really say something in new, attractive, and imaginative ways. Very few library exhibitions are worth the name, very few. Who wants to go look at an exhibition of books that are open to a title page, and you look at the label underneath it tells you what's on the title page in a different arrangement of letters? That's ridiculous. I compare it to those art historians who show you a slide and say, "Now you see the Virgin with the Christ child in her left arm. Next slide, please. And now you see the Virgin with the Christ child in her right arm." Tell me why this is significant. What does it mean? There's an awful lot of art history that is taught just that way. This is a copy of Horace Walpole's memoirs [showing book], first edition, printed by himself, and it says so on the title page, so why do you need a label underneath that tells you the same thing? [laughter] Tell us that Walpole was an eighteenth-century aesthete who created his own world there at Strawberry Hill. Tell us how he was representative of his time and his contemporaries. What did his contemporaries think of him? What did the guy down the street from Strawberry Hill think of Horace Walpole, and why is this book different from other books?

I'm just picking at straws, but most library exhibits are as dull as ditch water, and as a matter of fact it's very rare that an exhibit of books alone is really interesting.

The essence of a book is what's *in it*, and if it's a book which is valued and important only because it's a beautiful object in itself, you can't see much of it in a glass case, and there's no other way to look at it because if ten people handled it, in ten minutes its value would be immediately destroyed. It's an art object, and it has to be protected. You wouldn't hand around a drawing by Raphael for people to get their gritty fingers and oily hands on, any more than you would a fine book. But most rare books are important because of what's in them, or what they represent.

If all you're interested in is reading Thomas Paine's *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, you can go out to any college bookstore and get it in paperback. Okay. But there is something significant about seeing this object as it was presented to the world for the very first time. It's everybody's credo, sort of taken for granted. "The rights of man," is a part of our language, but where did it come from? Who first coined the phrase, "rights of man"? I don't know if it was Thomas Paine, but we know that there it is in that title and we know that book. You can make exhibitions really live, but most of them are terrible. I don't know anything more dull than having to look at the backs of books, and exhibits that show the backs of books, to me, are a waste of my time. I've reached a point where I don't have to go anymore to book exhibits, and I don't. I don't go unless I have to, let me put it that way. I'm seldom interested in looking at books under glass, unless it's something that I've never seen before, an illustration or a type font, or an arrangement of a page, or just because I've never seen

that book before and here is an opportunity to see one little piece of it. A book is a living thing, and it should speak to you. It should answer your questions and there should be a give and take.

SMITH: I'd like to get back to some more specific things about UCLA. For instance, what was your involvement with Elmer Belt? Did you help him build his library?

EDELSTEIN: My involvement with him was very close. Of course, the main part of the library was built by the time I got there, but I worked very closely with Elmer and with Kate Steinitz, Jake Zeitlin, and Bob Vosper. The collection had been pretty much formed, but I did help them add a few pieces to it when I was there in California. The use of the [Elmer] Belt Library [of Vinciana] was not very good because it wasn't really available. When URL was built, and the Belt room installed, there was [some use], but then things began to go down somewhat. It bothered me that this stuff was there, in this pretty room, not being used. Actually, it was not really a very pretty room. I don't think it was very well designed; it was too off-putting. Everybody, I'm sure even the rawest undergraduate, had heard of Leonardo da Vinci, but that wasn't enough to know something about this fascinating man and all of his interests and accomplishments and so on. The Belt room was the typical treasure room in a university library: dark, with heavy furniture.

I was part of the group that [tried to enliven] that room, and we didn't really

succeed. I wanted to lighten it up, I wanted those books out of there, on exhibition, which I've just said I don't think is entirely satisfactory, but still it's better than nothing, and I wanted to have lectures in there, and other events. I wanted young people to come in there and find something exciting and have some contact with Leonardo da Vinci. There was an attempt made for a while, but then it fell by the wayside, and I just had too many other things to do. I couldn't really pursue it. But to this day I think it's kind of wasted, and the university doesn't take advantage of it, and it doesn't add anything.

I think a library which doesn't add anything isn't alive. There are all kinds of ways to add; you don't have to have a lot of money. It's very easy to build a great library if you have all the money in the world, so I don't take as much credit as people like to think I do, or want to even give me, for the work I did at the Getty. It wasn't all that hard. I had all the money in the world. But the things that I got were truly wonderful, and it's true that you can spend money wisely, or foolishly, so maybe I'm being hard on myself. Nevertheless, I had all this money, which made things easier, and I think I spent it wisely. The Belt Library had all these original resources of Vincian studies, but there were all kinds of [other] things that they could have had. There were even caricatures. I had an idea to have a little exhibition of caricatures of Leonardo—things that made fun of him. They said we couldn't do that; it wasn't serious. Okay, that didn't work. Then there were other things like that. And now,

UCLA, which has one of the great collections known on Leonardo da Vinci, is selling one of the few Leonardo codices.

SMITH: I don't think it's UCLA that's selling the codex, it's the [Armand] Hammer Foundation. Are you talking about the Codex Hammer?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. It's UCLA's. He gave it to the university. One of the things that he gave that he couldn't take back.

SMITH: I thought it was the Hammer Foundation that was selling it.

EDELSTEIN: No I don't think so. It would be interesting to find out for sure which it is. I think it's UCLA—or it may be a combination.

SMITH: If it's UCLA, it's criminal.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, it's true. This is a codex which is not primarily "artistic." Put that in quotes. It's Leonardo's writings and his drawings, these little marginalia, about hydraulics; mostly about taming the Arno and various hydraulic inventions and dreams that he had. He had a big scheme for controlling the Arno, you know, which every hundred years or so floods disastrously, the way it did in 1966. If I'm right and it is UCLA, and I think it is, certainly partially, $2,000,000 is all they're going to get, if they get that, because the money isn't around anymore like it was in the eighties. Even if it's not Leonardo the artist, it's Leonardo the engineer; it's still Leonardo, and it is an original prime document. To sell that just doesn't seem right, it seems to me they're selling themselves short, and there are all kinds of things that you could do

with it. So I don't know, I think it's very, very shortsighted.

SMITH: What was your involvement with the collecting of the Aldines, which UCLA is very proud of, and which Franklin Murphy was very personally involved in?

EDELSTEIN: Well, my involvement there was marginal, to tell you the truth, because that really took off after I left. My involvement was always a large one, but as an outside adviser, up to the day that Franklin died. He would call me up, he would ask me what I thought, this dealer or that price, had I seen that copy, you know, that kind of thing. So I was involved to that extent, and then in my last days at UCLA, till 1972, I began to buy. When I came back, I came with a different title. I became the humanities bibliographer for the University Research Library, and a lecturer in the library school. This was Andy Horn's doing of course, and Bob Vosper's. They worked it out together.

SMITH: So you had an official faculty position?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, I was officially a member of the school faculty. I only got one salary, but I think that's the way they did it because probably one or the other couldn't have managed the full salary, so they pooled the money, and that was that. It was a very nice arrangement for me. Especially if I wanted to not be found, I could always be in the other place. [laughter] I was in the Powell Building [as well as URL] so that worked out very, very nicely. I enjoyed the teaching very much, and I developed a course that maybe, if I continue to teach I'll do again—although I'm not really as

interested as I was. It was a course that had never been taught before, anywhere, and it became very popular. It was on the history of publishing and the book trade. When I left and Bob Vosper started to teach, he kept it up for a while and used my notes and syllabus. It was very successful. A lot of students from different departments in the university came: the English department, history, as well as the library. I've forgotten how many years I did that.

SMITH: What were your goals for that class? What did you want the students to get out of it?

EDELSTEIN: I wanted them to understand what the book trade was all about and what publishing meant. What does a publisher do? Why does a book have to be published? How does it get to the newsstand, how does it get to the bookshop? Most people see a book in a bookstore, or a magazine on a newsstand, and they don't know how it got there. They have no idea of what's involved. So that was a small goal. My larger goal was to try to instill some awareness and understanding that all of this was an aspect of cultural history, and this was a counterpart of the history of literacy, and of reading. Those were generally my goals as I try to think of it. So I was very happy with that, and maybe I'll try to do it again, but to tell you the truth, one's interests change, and I would have to develop a new course. It was twenty years ago and we know a lot more now and things have changed.

SESSION THREE: 6 NOVEMBER, 1994

[Tape VII, Side One]

EDELSTEIN: Yesterday, you brought up the matter of networks and the importance or lack of importance of connections with dealers, which in the minds of some people is what made me valuable to various institutions, particularly the Getty Center [now the Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities]. I, too hastily, said yes, that was right. There are other factors involved. To leave it at that would do a great injustice to me, but mostly to the dealers and to the sort of process that's involved. Yes, connections to dealers around the world is very, very important, and as I said yesterday, the fact that one has a big, generous budget to offer them certainly smooths the way. But we mustn't leave the impression that it ends there. The relationship that exists between a collector and a dealer in the rare book trade has to be a two-way street. The dealer has to be cultivated, and when he does his job well, he learns even more about you, the collector, whether it's an institution or an individual, than you yourself are able to teach him. He has to do his homework very carefully. He has to be imbued, as most of the great dealers are, with a desire to see to it that the book that he has in hand goes to the right place.

I don't want to discount the fact that the book trade is for profit. Nobody who understands how books are produced and get from one end of the distribution scale to the other will resent a dealer who makes an honest profit. Of course we all

snicker at dealers who make an enormous profit, when we know something about the background of the book. But a dealer deserves the honest profit that he makes. He's got enormous overhead, he's got to pay for the lights and the rent and the staff and the postage and this and that. Not to mention the knowledge, the experience, and the hard work that preceded his acquisition of a particular item, and his cataloging it and describing it, and finding the right place at the right time at the right price. These are not matters that can be dismissed by saying this particular bibliographer or this particular acquisitions librarian knew all the dealers and they all knew him. The good librarian or the good curator will first of all know who has what and how that dealer might be interested in disposing of it. The objects for sale in a good dealer's stockroom are not always available just because they're there. The dealer will wait until it's the right time to sell it. Some of that waiting will involve his learning as much about that object or that collection as possible.

The good dealer is a scholar dealer. He operates very much the same way as the good bibliographer or the good acquisitions librarian, in an almost instinctive way. Like the good librarian, he has what is very often described as a nose for books. I don't mean to digress, but I just want to say something about that. Language such as that is often used and people don't pay much attention to it, but it's a reality. There are people who can go from one bookshop to another in the area around St.-Germain-des-Près, open the doors, and not go any further, because there's a sense, a

"smell," if you will, since we're talking about noses, that this is not the place. Then at another doorway the dealer will know: "There's a good book in here." Not, "There's a good array of books in here," but, "There's a good book in here." This can happen. It doesn't have to be in such a direct manner. That sort of nose operates in terms of the catalogs that dealers make. When I was really active as an acquisitions librarian in one institution or another, it would not be an unusual day to receive as many as ten or a dozen catalogs.

SMITH: Day after day?

EDELSTEIN: Day after day. Auction catalogs and bookseller's catalogs from all over the world. I can tear open an envelope and pick up a catalog of an unknown dealer. The catalogs from the dealers I know, who I've had a lot of experience with, sometimes go unopened because I know there's not going to be anything. I know the kind of books they're interested in, I know that they catalog properly or improperly, and I know that the condition of the book is sometimes excellent and sometimes not. I know the pricing structure. I very often know the sources of their material. Because I know those things, sometimes those are the first that I open, and sometimes the last, or they may never get opened. But I'm talking about somebody new, or somebody that doesn't issue many catalogs. I'll open it, and there's something about the look, the feel, the smell as it were, even if there's no detectable odor, I'm talking about this sort of indefinable, indescribable nose. Something passes between

my fingers and my mind and my eyes that tells me it's going to be worthwhile to give this catalog attention.

SMITH: This is after just opening and perusing it.

EDELSTEIN: I don't even have to open it.

SMITH: You don't even have to open it. Okay.

EDELSTEIN: Now, as a matter of shorthand I'm referring to myself, but there are many people who know how to do this. I don't want to make too big a deal out of it. So to go back to relations with dealers. I thought for a long time after you left yesterday, and this morning, that we were not giving it its due. There are other aspects. The dealer has an obligation. If he meets his obligation, he makes his honest profit by getting good material, studying it carefully, describing it well, housing it well, printing up the right kind of catalog so that not only is it attractive but it is legible and says what it needs to say—not just sales hype but something worthwhile, the hook, which is the right one for the institution or the collector that it's going to.

There used to be a great man in American bookselling history, and also a very great scholar, named [Hellmut] Lehmann-Haupt, a German who came over in the thirties, I suppose, along with that huge wave of immigration. He worked for many years for H. P. Kraus in New York, one of the premier people in the rare book trade in the world. In addition to being a great bookseller, Lehmann-Haupt was a scholar of the first order. He wrote an absolutely first-rate, still heavily used book on the

history of the book in America, as well as a wonderful book on the history of playing cards at the time of Gutenberg. He was a great man and a great teacher. I can remember how struck I was when I first began working with him. I had known about this man before I went to UCLA the first time. He was not young, and he struggled up from wherever he had parked his car to the library with this heavy suitcase that wasn't on wheels, the way you see suitcases today. He was dragging this enormous suitcase filled with books. The first impression of a lot of people, and it may have been mine, was to think of him as a sort of carpetbagger, a huckster dragging this suitcase behind him, who was going to try to sell me something.

Well, he did sell me something. When I say "me," I mean the university. When you work so closely with this material, you have to fight all the time to realize this stuff does not belong to you. You may know more about it than anybody else in the world, you may love it, you think, more than anybody else in the world, but it's not yours. It belongs to the library that you work for, the university, the research institute or whatever it is, and it's not even theirs. If you think in grander terms it belongs to the world of scholarship, and to the world of other people who love books. This is something that people in charge of great collections need to keep in the front of their head all the time. It's not their material. So, back to Lehmann-Haupt.

He opened up his case and put a book on a table and said, "This is a book you have to have because it fills a hole in your collection that has been empty for a long

time; it fits chronologically, objectively, subjectively, in every possible way into that collection. I have searched and I know you don't have it." Well, when I heard this, I knew that that man had done more than his homework, and Lehmann-Haupt did this kind of thing over and over and over again. In those days he wasn't able to sit at home or in his office with a computer terminal at his elbow to see what was in my library. He had to do some real legwork. So there's that requirement on the dealer's part. As for the librarian's part in this, it's again a matter of connection. Sometimes—this may sound strange, and strange as it may be, it's nevertheless true—there are times when you have to woo a dealer in order to get him to sell you what you want, or what you think you need. A dealer has to be convinced that your place is the right place for that material. It's not even a case of your needing that book to plug a hole in your collection. He must be convinced that your institution and your colleagues understand and appreciate the material in what he thinks is the proper way. The dealer has to like you.

I'm not going to use names here, but in the institution that we both know very well, there is a curator who is highly respected for his knowledge and for his research, and his eye and all of those things, whose usefulness to the institution is great, but he is also a lead weight around the institution in terms of the development of the collection that he supervises, because he is so disliked by the people in the trade who have the kind of material that he is responsible for acquiring. No one doubts his

knowledge, or his perspicacity, or his knowledge and love of the materials that he handles, but he's not liked. One of the reasons that he's not liked is that he does not treat the dealers with the respect that they deserve. He does not understand that these people, much as they may be grand ladies and gentlemen, are business men and women. They have payrolls to meet and light bills and rent bills to pay, or they have material on consignment and the owners need the money.

He thinks nothing of asking for some material on approval and keeping it for months and months and then saying, "Well, I can't raise the money for it," or, "I don't really like it," or "I've found that there's another copy down the road," or something like that. He thinks that the bookseller is just another tradesman, and with certain kinds of tradesmen you are almost expected to say, "You know, you really don't expect me to pay the advertised price. Surely you can make a better price." There are times when everybody does that, when it's appropriate, and there are times when it's not. But this person doesn't have a sense of when it's not. In addition to which it's suspected highly by a lot of people in and out of the trade that even though this person has a high reputation in his field, he may really not deserve it when one realizes how many lost opportunities there have been—not because he's been crude about relations with the dealers, but because he really didn't see the value of the material.

I'm just using this anonymous but real example to expand further. There are

dealers who will say, "I'm not going to offer this. I don't want to deal with him. He's a pain in the neck, he keeps things too long, he doesn't pay on time, and he's uncouth." There are collectors who say, "I'm not going to give this to that institution, not as long as he's in charge." And there are scholars who will say, "Yes, I could benefit by looking at the material there, but it's just not worth it if I have to go through all that nonsense with him." Well, the institution I'm speaking of is prospering nevertheless, but if it were another institution and different circumstances this could be disastrous. The good that he does in this particular case no doubt outweighs all of the other factors. I'm only using it as an example, because it could be worse, it could be better, in this case or similar cases.

One more thing. The librarian who knows where to go and is conscious of and acts upon all these things that I have been talking about has to convince the institution he or she represents of the importance of respecting the dealer's own obligations and treating him as fairly as possible, which means paying bills as expeditiously as possible and not keeping material for ever and ever while the difficult decision is being made about whether or not to acquire it. You want that dealer to be on your side, because if he has something great, of course he's going to go first to the person or the institution that he thinks can afford it, but if it's really worthwhile and the creditors are not pounding on his door, if he doesn't feel comfortable with that institution, if he feels that that institution does not appreciate his contribution to the

history of that object, he'll go somewhere else. If he doesn't sell it today, he'll sell it tomorrow. A lot of people operate that way. I couldn't begin to count the number of times I've heard the dealers say, "Well, I'd really rather sell it to so-and-so. You people don't deserve this and they're better at taking care of things than you are." So, that was a long disquisition, but I think actually it was important to go into it, because I was uneasy about where we left it yesterday.

SMITH: No, that was an important elaboration of material. Otto Wittmann had mentioned that in the art trade, for instance, Georges Wildenstein would actually put paintings in the cellar for forty or fifty years as part of just letting the value grow. Are there book dealers who do something similar?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. A similar sort of thing is buying up an edition, and just feeding it out little by little. When I was working on a bibliography of Wallace Stevens, the *Selected Poems* were published in England in a very small edition, without the full permission of Alfred Knopf, who was Wallace Stevens's American publisher. So it was withdrawn, and supposedly pulped, but a very clever bookseller, George Simms, who is also no longer with us, got a clue somehow that there was this cache of copies of Wallace Stevens's *Selected Poems*, and he got them, and he put out a catalog, and there was a copy, at a good hefty price. He sold them off one by one by one over the years. There's nothing wrong with that, and everybody who has one is very happy. I don't know how many there are now, but a lot more than anybody suspected, and one

begins to think that none were pulped at all. So, yes, they will do that, or they will wait till the right time.

This is true in art as well as books and manuscripts. The market is down. Someone may have a fantastic illuminated manuscript from the scriptorium of Rouen Cathedral, very much like one that just sold at Christie's in London. If that dealer puts it up for sale, would it get as much as the one just like it that sold yesterday, or would he do better by just putting it away for a year? A house like Wildenstein can do that because it's rich, it's got a lot of capital, and if it doesn't sell that it could sell something else. So the dealer might say, "Well, it's a gamble and times are not so good; maybe there isn't a market for the manuscripts that were done in that particular monastery or by that particular illustrator," or something like that. It just depends on the situation. But it's market driven. A lot depends on the circumstances. There may be a glut. Look at Andy Warhol. For a while there was a terrible glut on the market of Warhol material, and then the market for Warhol became terribly depressed, and there was a lot of talk that he wasn't much of an artist anyway, and so on and so on. Now it's changed again. The Warhol market these days is way up. The same thing is true of books. When [John] Galsworthy was writing in the twenties, people paid a fortune for his books, even as they were being published. There were all sorts of special editions and limited editions and signed this and signed that, and all this kind of stuff and then it died. You could pick up Galsworthy for nothing, pennies. Then

there was that television serial, *The Forsyte Saga*, and volumes of Galsworthy began coming out of the woodwork all over the place. The market just boomed. Now I'm pretty sure it's quite low again. So there are all sorts of factors of that kind.

[Tape VII, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: There's another factor which is not so much true of the art world as it is of the book world, and that is a smart dealer will put things aside until he can make a grouping, a collection. As I mentioned to you yesterday, there are many individual books that are desirable, and will sell, but in terms of institutional collecting, particularly collecting for the support of research and scholarship, things brought together in collection are much more desirable. A smart dealer knows this as well as anybody else and will put things down in the cellar or in the attic until that happens. He may be lucky and it could happen quickly, or it may take a very long time. This is done very often. Again, you see, this is where the good librarian comes in. The good librarian may know this, may share information with the dealer, and say, "You're building up this collection, and it might interest us some day. It would be of even greater interest if you went over to Paris and bought that little collection there and put it together with yours." It's a two-way street. When it's really working well, there is a body of dealers out there with whom the librarian or the bibliographer can work.

SMITH: One of the things that the people at the Getty were interested in was getting a sense of how different individual dealers approached their trade. Would this be a

good time to expand from what you have been talking about to what the personal strengths and weaknesses of the various dealers are that you've been most closely associated with—how they would understand their material, or how they would tend to approach these things? You mentioned Lehmann-Haupt, and I think that was actually quite an interesting example of someone who clearly must have spent a lot of time in the card catalog.

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, a lot of time in the card catalog and with the material. And he was a good psychologist. He knew enough about me to know that that approach was the right one. You know, the degree of variation is so great, and we're talking about an awful lot of people. Do you really want me to talk about specific firms and individuals?

SMITH: I don't want a laundry list, but if we could look at several people you're familiar with—

EDELSTEIN: I'm thinking of a man like Barney [Bernard M.] Rosenthal, for example, in Berkeley. He comes from a very distinguished lineage of book sellers and scholars. His father, whose first name escapes me, was the son of Jacques Rosenthal, who started it all off in Munich back in the last century. Barney's father married into the Olschi family of Florence, which was also already famous for its place in the antiquarian book world, and in publishing. So there was this wonderful marriage in Florence, in the Palazzo Vecchio. There were lots of children and grand-children, and

they were spread all over the world. I believe the Olschis remained in Italy, but the Rosenthals had to leave Europe for various parts of the world. Barney's older brother Albi is the greatest dealer in the world in the literature of music and music itself, in Oxford and in London. His brother Felix, who is now retired and has moved back to California, lives in San Rafael, above San Francisco. He ran L'Art Ancien in Zürich for many, many years. They have a sister in Holland and one in Israel. They're known as the Rosenthal Mafia. [laughter] But they are absolutely splendid dealers, each with his own specialty. Barney, who is a little older than I am, is a very close friend; we've been friends and colleagues since the fifties. He used to be in New York in the early part of his career, but he graduated from Berkeley and was there at the same time that Joe Rubinstein, whom I mentioned to you before, was there. So he's happily ensconced there.

If you want something that has to do with medieval and Renaissance learning, you go to Barney Rosenthal. If you want a text manuscript, not a printed manuscript, not an illuminated manuscript, but a schoolboy's marginalia scribbling, or a scholar's annotations in a book, that's the kind of thing that interests him, and interests him not only as a dealer but as a scholar. He has written and published quite a lot. He's got an attractive shop in Berkeley, but he doesn't spend very much time there. He spends most of his time in his own library at home, studying or researching one thing or another. People know that Barney Rosenthal is famous for his manuscripts, but he

has a hard time trying to explain to people that the kinds of manuscripts he's interested in are not the ones that most people think of in terms of manuscripts. He's not interested in the pretty page, or the illuminated initial; he's interested in the most crabbed, common little annotation in the margin of a manuscript or the end-papers of a book—the worse the writing is, the better.

Then, if you want the most famous of manuscripts and books in the finest collector's condition, as it's known, the place to go is Hans Kraus in New York. The firm is now run by his daughter and son-in-law. In Paris there used to be a man named [Georges] Heilbrun, a very old school type of person. Now, you would go to Heilbrun to buy a single item of the highest order; it wasn't like walking into an art gallery looking for a painting that might look attractive on your walls, and looking until you saw something you liked and something you could afford. You wouldn't go to Heilbrun for that; first of all you would go in and you'd never see a book; you would see elegant, beautiful walls with gorgeous things hanging on them. A very courtly, handsome gentleman would come out and greet you. You would go there in the same way that you might go to Wildenstein to buy a Cézanne—something special. And you had to prove that you wanted it, that you needed it, and that you deserved it, not to mention that you could pay for it—that came at the very end. You could spend a whole day with Heilbrun. You'd get there at ten thirty or eleven o'clock, and there'd be conversation about the book world and the art world, the social world, this

that and the other, and they'd take you to lunch. Then you'd come back and there'd be more talk, and before you left, in mid or late afternoon, this treasure that you had come half way around the world to look at would be brought out by somebody from another room and laid out on a piece of velvet, and you, the customer, had to sort of sell it to yourself. And all this time you were being charmed to the nth degree, and not in a false kind of way; his charm was real, it was true. He was a marvelous man, absolutely marvelous. There aren't enough like him.

My two favorite dealers in the whole world—except for people like Barney, who are close friends—are Carlo Alberto Chiesa in Milan, and André Jammes in Paris. For years, when I was at the National Gallery of Art, and when I was at UCLA before that and during the years that I was at the Getty, I would go to Europe a couple of times a year and naturally I'd make an itinerary and people would expect me. I'd walk into André Jammes's place in Paris, sit down, there'd be chit chat; it was comfortable and nice. In André Jammes's case, what he had to show you was always in another room. You would say, "Well, what have you got to show me?" and he would take you into another room, where you'd see a shelf, several shelves, or a huge table piled up. In Chiesa's case it was always marvelous primary source material for the study of the history of Italian cities—topographical material. It was absolutely gorgeous stuff, and always right. We didn't always buy everything. We couldn't always afford everything. Sometimes their aim was not exact; sometimes we had the

material already, but even if it wasn't bull's eye, they never missed the target altogether.

SMITH: Was there a shift in the kinds of material he showed you as you moved from UCLA to the National Gallery to the Getty?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes. After all, institutions have different needs and criteria and agendas and so you followed that, of course.

SMITH: And he had a sense of what your agendas were?

EDELSTEIN: Of course, yes; that was my job, to keep him informed. It was the same thing with André Jammes. There would always be a surprise. There'd be masses of ordinary, good stuff that you would be pleased to see and be even more pleased to get, but then all of a sudden there would be a page, or a book, or a manuscript that was slipped in, waiting to be noticed. It would be something absolutely irresistible, perfect for the needs that you were trying to fulfill.

There are some people who have good material but they are not good psychologists, or they are not good presenters. There is a dealer who's retired now, Jacques Vellekoop, the proprietor of Goldschmidt's in London. He is one of the most learned men in the book trade in our times. He's a Dutchman who settled in England and worked himself up and finally inherited the Goldschmidt firm. If he limited himself to his catalogs or to his offers, it was wonderful. But he wouldn't do that. He would always come around from time to time; he paid lots of visits to America. He

kept an apartment in New York, and he traveled extensively. When he injected his personality into [a transaction] it was sometimes a little bit more difficult, because he did not have an ingratiating personality. I mean ingratiating in a good sense.

When you work with somebody over a long period of time you begin to know them and you overlook their faults. Jacques is another human being with faults, and one piece of wisdom that does come to you as you get older is how important it is to overlook those faults. If they're not vicious or harmful, you overlook them. You learn how to accept people for the best things that they are. But Jacques didn't have the psychology to arrange things so that you would see for yourself the value of his books and manuscripts. He insisted that you recognize them in his terms. I think he lost a lot of business. He would bother people, and there were a lot of people who could not deal with him. If you are a private collector you can do whatever you want, but if you have the obligation to build as fine a collection as possible for an institution, sometimes you have to work with people that are not at all as charming as the next guy. Sometimes it was very difficult to work with Jacques because he would whine that we weren't buying enough, and we were always saying it wasn't worth that much and he should charge less, all of which is true.

SMITH: So was he was one of those people whose pricing patterns caused concern?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. We never bought anything from Jacques Vellekoop at the price it was advertised or first asked.

SMITH: You mentioned earlier that there were certain dealers with whom you would never quibble about price.

EDELSTEIN: That's right. I would never ask André Jammes to lower a price. I might ask to pay half now and half later, or something like that, because of budgetary constraints, but that's something that everybody understands. There are a number of factors involved. First, you have to know what the thing is worth. I'm just taking that for granted, I didn't feel that I had to say that.

SMITH: Right. Though the monetary worth of something is not just a given, right?

EDELSTEIN: No. Okay. How do you know what the right price is? There are lots of things involved. This is an outlandish example, but take a Gutenberg Bible. Now, that is a really terrible example because I know the price of just about every Gutenberg Bible that's ever been sold. Let me try to think of another example that's more apropos. Let's see—

SMITH: What about the *Transsibérien*—

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, that's a very good one, because that was a controversial acquisition at the Getty. I think it's still controversial—*La prose du Transsibérien* of Sonia Delaunay and Blaise Cendrars. Well, I know I paid the right price, or rather, I counseled the Getty to pay the right price. Let's take a book like [Sebastiano] Serlio's, on architecture [*Regole generali di architettura*], the kind of book that the Getty has bought in many editions. It's a rare book, but it's also a common book. Or

books by [Leon Battista] Alberti, or Vitruvius, which are costly.

SMITH: But have a clear track record.

EDELSTEIN: But they have a clear track record. Your first obligation is to be prepared. You've got to know what it is. So you do your homework. You read catalogs, even if your budget is all gone. I've had people tell me, what's the point of reading all these catalogs when you've no money to spend? But think what you learn. You judge a dealer by the quality of his stock, the way he's described the material, so you learn that. You learn that a book that you thought was unique is not unique, it's all over the place. A book that you thought existed only in English has been translated into umpteen different languages. It's endless, what you can learn from reading a good catalog.

You make connections, you learn more about the fantastic interaction of cultures. It's unbelievable, the things that the Jesuits in China have done. There's the work of [Juan de] Zumarraga in Latin America. He wrote back to Charles V: "If you really want to do something important, create an Indian bishop." If there had been just *one* Indian bishop the entire history of Latin America would have been different than it has been. He knew this in the sixteenth century. I learned this in a bookseller's catalog. I pursued it later and asked some Latin Americanists about this. Zumarraga's a fantastic figure, a man of tremendous contradictions. At the same time that he was saying things like this he was running the Inquisition.

You also learn about pricing if you read a catalog carefully. Many things come up over and over and over again, and you see patterns. So you are prepared. for the things which are unique and different and don't come up, like a manuscript. A manuscript, by definition, is a unique thing, but there are likenesses, and you learn to see those patterns and make comparisons. So you have a knowledge, as well as a feeling that has been nurtured. It's like taste. If you taste something, you know if it tastes right or not, because you know what it's supposed to taste like. I mean you know a bad apple from a good one. Okay, that might not be a good analogy. But you build this up.

Reading catalogs isn't the only way. You have to study bibliographies, you have to read history, you have to talk with your colleagues, you have to look at books that have had different histories and are in unusual conditions, and so on. But there is absolutely no substitute for the reading of catalogs. It is quite tragic that in many institutions, including the Getty Center, the reading of catalogs is one of those things that people do only when they're forced to, or only under unusual conditions. There's no question that everybody has other things to do and other responsibilities, but there's never enough time, and there are a lot of bureaucratic and administrative problems, and everybody has a boss, and the boss decrees what is the priority. But the other side of the picture is this: if you really are interested, and if your responsibility has anything to do with the development of the collections, and you

neglect reading the good booksellers' catalogs, you're simply not doing your job in the full sense of the term. You need to read catalogs constantly for what they can teach you as well as what they offer.

SMITH: How often do dealers come to you? You've primarily talked about your traveling.

EDELSTEIN: There's Bernet, for example, from New York. I can't remember the old man's name, but he also came from Germany in the '30s, and started with art books primarily, not terribly rare ones, but a general, very good stock of antiquarian material on the history of art. He's retired, and elderly, probably in a nursing home, but his business has been taken up by Peter Bernet, who continued the practice that his father and mother had of putting out catalogs, going to book fairs, and visiting institutions. He went around with huge sets of cards and lists, in big suitcases, like Lehmann-Haupt used to do. As I mentioned, some people refer to these guys as peddlers, which is ridiculous. They may come from a tradition of itinerant peddlers, carrying wares around, like the guys who used to go on the frontier with their tin cups and cooking equipment and rabbit skins and all that stuff, but the difference is in the merchandise.

In any case, Peter Bernet still does this. This is sometimes welcome and sometimes not. It's welcome if he has sent the lists or the cards in advance so that they can be checked and everybody's time isn't wasted. Sometimes he'll come in and

say hello, put things down, and say, "I'll come back later, when you've had a chance to look it over." Sometimes these people hang around and look over your shoulder and point out the obvious to you. It's a balance. Sometimes it's a worthwhile thing, and sometimes it's not. It's a function of learning how to organize your time and make priorities. I like it, because you shouldn't be in the position where you're divorced from human contact. I have found that even though my first reaction was, "Oh no, I don't have time for this. I've got all these memos to write, and meetings to go to, and papers to sign," in the end, that personal contact has been another way to build up this reservoir of knowledge. How do you know the price is right, or how do you know that that book is not the only book that there is? By talking and listening, as well as by reading.

That's why book fairs are very important. I was looking at a catalog the other day, here at the John Carter Brown Library. Although I don't have any specific responsibilities with respect to building the collections of the John Carter Brown Library, I can't just throw away a habit of a lifetime, so I've decided to read the catalogs that come to me which relate to the material in the John Carter Brown Library, which is the history of the Americas up to the death of George Washington in North America and the death of Bolivar in South America. The John Carter Brown Library is fantastic; it's one of the richest libraries that exists.

The very first item that I read in this catalog from Chamonal in Paris

described a book about a French expedition to America. According to the description, this book escaped the attention of [Joseph] Sabin, the bibliographer of Americana, and there is no copy in America. Well, this is the kind of red flag that people like me, who have spent their lives buying for institutions, just love. I went to the JCB catalog, and I see two copies of the edition that they say escaped Sabin and no library in America has, plus umpteen other editions. You've got to apply yourself, and you also have to be curious. Is what the dealer says true? When François and Rodolphe Chamonal wrote this, they were sincere. They weren't trying to pull the wool over anybody's eyes, because they know that a place like the John Carter Brown Library is not going to take their word for it. Somebody in their shop wrote this description of the book, and it's true that it did escape Sabin, and it is not in the National Union Catalog. They didn't write a letter or send a fax to JCB to find out, because the book wasn't worth it in terms of that kind of expenditure. But they knew very well that the John Carter Brown Library, or the Lilly Library in Indiana, or Yale, or other places that have important holdings in this subject, would investigate pretty thoroughly.

SMITH: How important is this sort of advance warning that allows you to decide whether you want to make a bid for something and to assemble your resources to get it before it actually goes onto the market? Does that happen that frequently?

EDELSTEIN: Well, yes and no. It seems to go in waves. There seem to be times

when this happens quite often and then there are times when the field seems fallow. But it happens when the dealer feels that he's going to get a response. Now if the dealer feels that his overtures are welcome, that they're going to be acted upon and taken seriously, he will continue to call, or write. If he feels, on the other hand, that his overtures are not being responded to, then he's going to forget you.

[Tape VIII, Side One]

EDELSTEIN: The Getty is very much interested in scholars' libraries; it's "right down their alley," as the expression goes. We're interested in the history of the discipline, and we're interested in how scholars' minds work, how they make connections, and how they come to conclusions. We're interested in the original materials that they've discovered, how they present their thoughts, and their scholarship. The Getty has bought quite a number of wonderful scholars' papers, and they are heavily used. But there has been a big change at the Getty in recent years. For some time there has been an extremely important scholar's library on the table at the Getty. At one time the invitation to get these particular papers would have inspired a positive response; now it's a very hesitant one. The Getty has been offered the library and papers of André and Oleg Grabar, father and son. You smile . . . so you know about this?

SMITH: Well, I know about them, I didn't know about the offer. I would wonder why anybody would hesitate—

EDELSTEIN: I wish somebody would tell me, because the offer is not going to be around much longer. It has come from a dealer who has been very friendly to the Getty, Elmar Seibel, from Ars Libri, in Boston. While he has profited greatly from his association with the Getty, it has been an honest profit, one that should not be resented at all. We've gotten full value for our money. He is the agent for Oleg Grabar, who inherited his father André's library, and the two libraries together are the finest private library known, in the world, on Islam and on Byzantine history and culture. Nobody quarrels with my assertion that this is an absolutely natural extension of the interests and collections of the Getty Center, and it belongs there, especially when you think of the related materials that are at UCLA on the same subjects. There is of course, some duplication, there always is duplication in large libraries. Now, space and shelving considerations are very important, and processing is very important, but I have mixed feelings, as most people do, about duplication. Duplication, if handled wisely, can be a very positive thing. There are lots of books that it's very handy to have more than one copy of. There are duplicates with which one can make money. If you trade them off, that's always more of a problem than exchanging them. Mr. Seibel has had a long history with the Getty of accepting duplicates in trade for future acquisitions from him.

What the delay is all about, I don't know. Yes, it's expensive, it costs a lot of money, but the price is not out of line considering what we have paid for similar

libraries and archives in the past. Some people might say, "You paid too much in the past." Well, this is definitely debatable. As I've indicated, I think I can justify the price that we paid for things. We didn't talk much about the *Transsibérien*, but we can if you want. Mr. Seibel is being extraordinary patient. Since I have retired from my full-time job at the Getty, last July, he has sent two lists to be checked. I don't know if they've been checked, nobody has informed me of the progress that has been made or not been made, and he is very concerned that the Getty get this, even though he will not be paid in full at once. He feels that that's where it belongs, considering the Getty's history, its interests, its collections, and its mission. If the libraries are bought, Oleg Grabar will continue to add to them, and we'll get more than we paid for.

André and Oleg Grabar are well known to the scholarly world, and the existence of their libraries has been known for a long time; the Getty is not the only possible customer. Mr. Seibel can sell this collection for Oleg tomorrow. He can sell it in Amman, he can sell it in Kuwait—he can sell it anywhere. This is not braggadocio or sales hype when he tells me this, I know it's true. So if the Getty doesn't pick itself up and make up its mind to do something about this, it's going to lose an unusual opportunity for enrichment. It will be the poorer institution because it won't have this material. I don't question the need to concentrate on the move [to the new Getty Center location], but there are times when you have to make room for an

opportunity that is just not going to come up again. The main [stumbling block] to this purchase is the question of duplicates. To certain minds, even the word "duplicate" is anathema. I totally disagree with this. I think duplicates are money in the bank.

A year has elapsed since this all came up, and it was long before that that I had talked about getting the Grabar stuff—practically from the time I came to the Getty. I would like to do my best for the institution, but I don't know how to spur them into some kind of action. Now they have to buy the entire thing. I think I could talk Elmar Seibel into taking out certain duplicates now, but not all of them anymore, because they simply don't want to be bothered, and they have a line-up of possible customers who would buy the whole thing. I find this rather troubling, because the money could be found, and space can always be rented, and processing can always be put off, but the opportunity may never come again. This is one of the vexing aspects of this sort of work—more than one person is involved. A private collector of course never has a problem in this respect; either you do it or you don't.

I want to come back to the question of duplicates. After the opening of east Europe and the fall of the Berlin wall, in '89, visitors began to appear from various places in the west, even as far west as California, and people became aware that the libraries of eastern Europe had been devastated. A lot was missing, especially for the years between the two world wars, and certainly the years after the Second World

War. So somebody got the idea that since we had all these duplicates in storage, why don't we be real good guys and do the charitable thing and pack them up and send them to libraries and institutions of eastern Europe? This program was developed and administered through the Getty Grant Program. I dissented and said that we ought to know something about the [recipient] institutions—how they were going to take care of these things, and how they would be distributed. I thought we should be cautious if we were going to do this. I wasn't in favor of the idea to begin with because I thought that the charity and good intentions of the Getty Trust were obvious enough in other respects, and we could make better use of the duplicates by using them as trade, for that day, which came quickly enough, when our budgets were going to be reduced. Well, that argument cut no ice and the duplicates were shipped off to Europe.

One day, I got a telephone call from Berlin, from one of my favorite dealers, Jürgen Holstein, who said, "We all know that the Russian Mafia is at work, and things are coming out of east Europe by the bushel, but what are all these Getty library duplicates that these people are bringing in to sell to me?" I challenge anybody to go to the libraries in the Czech Republic, or Hungary, or Romania, wherever, and find the books that we sent over. They've been stolen, they've been sold, they've been taken home. I'm not saying this is true of every single one. The good intentions of the Trust in this respect are laudable, but I think they acted too quickly, and without

the certainties that needed to be lined up. I really found this very upsetting and disappointing, because I thought the institution was really selling itself short; it was not necessary to do this. The bone fides of the Getty Trust are superb, and very well known. I didn't think that it had to jump on this bandwagon so quickly.

SMITH: You have mentioned the *Transsibérien*.

EDELSTEIN: Well, this was an example which I'm not sure that I really want to dwell on at length. At every institution, and I'm not so sure it's such a bad thing, you have to justify what you're doing, and in a sense that's good for you. I got a little impatient, I think, because I had to justify over and over again the fact that we bought this object. We paid a lot of money for it, I've forgotten exactly how much. We bought it at auction at Sotheby's in New York and it was about $90,000. Buying at auction is a wonderful way to learn, especially if there's a preceding auction record. In this case, everything worked right. The sale was announced, and the catalog came out in plenty of time before the sale. They had an estimate of what it might go at, although estimates are notoriously low, to entice you. It was written up very well, the illustration was good, and it was a well-known thing, the *Transsibérien*. Our copy is not unique. There are five or six copies that I know of personally.

I have no objection to things which exist elsewhere, as long as they're not in the immediate area. If a copy is right next door, then I think one should do some very careful thinking before acquiring it, especially at $90,000 a crack. But when we

bought the *Transsibérien* a few years ago at that auction, at the very correct price of around $90,000, there was no other copy in the immediate area that we knew about. I have no quarrel at all with having to justify a purchase, I think it's healthy. I'm personalizing this again by saying it keeps "me" on my toes, but this is true of everybody concerned; it keeps one on one's toes. Otherwise, it would be much too easy to fall into the habit of thinking you can do anything you want, and you are the ultimate judge and boss, and you're not. It's very important to keep that perspective fresh. So I don't mind explaining to the trustees, or the president of the board, or the director and everybody else, but an institution should have some kind of continuity. If you justify something, and you do it once, twice, four times, and you do it well, and then you have to continue this forever and see this object that is concerned heralded as an example of either extravagance or misuse of funds, then I think you have a reason to feel misunderstood, not appreciated, out of place—all of those things.

SMITH: That does suggest that there's some conflict over the direction of the library or the collection development policy, and perhaps also suggests that maybe there's a trajectory, that as your quantity increases, the resistance to individual purchases is going to increase.

EDELSTEIN: Well, there's no question about that. There is a mistaken notion floating around that there is something finite about the collecting that the Getty is doing. Finite, as exemplified by a building, with x amount of space, x amount of

shelving, and so on. And then there is the rather plebeian approach to things which expresses itself in such phraseology as "We've got 800,000 books already, isn't that enough?" Cutting back may be necessary because of lack of funds or redirection of funds and other priorities, because people have other things to do, and all of those things can enter into the picture quite justifiably. But nothing can justify ending the purchasing. As I said, a library is a living organism, and a library that doesn't buy is not living, not breathing. I take what may be an extreme view in this respect. I differ quite strongly with my colleagues, not only at the Getty but in many places, in that I tend to feel that a library that does not have a backlog is not doing its job. Now, I know that that sounds sort of off the wall, but I sincerely believe that. You shouldn't be overwhelmed with material that you can't control, but I'm talking about a controllable size, which will vary with each institution.

The direction of the collecting at the Getty is hard for me to talk about, because I really don't know what the answer is. Not only do I not know what the answer is, but what I suspect is that there isn't a direction. I'm sure there are people who are looking for a direction, and there are some people who are not looking, who feel that they are just going to continue doing whatever they've been doing. There are those two things going on, but the fact is, I am not [clear] about where the collecting is going. There is one thing that we all know we ought to subscribe to: research and scholarship come first. This is repeated so much it's like a mantra. We all know that,

it's ingrained now, but you hear it over and over again, and I have to say that I am not sure that everybody has the same understanding of what is meant by research and scholarship. I think that our new director, Salvatore Settis, who is the embodiment of research and scholarship, and the other people in charge, Tom Reese, and Lynn O'Leary Archer and everyone else have a big job ahead of them to develop things so that this mantra becomes something really solid.

Now, I'm not saying this in a superior way. I know what research and scholarship is when I engage in it, and I would recognize your research and scholarship if I read an article or a book of yours, but I'm not sure what is meant by "research and scholarship" at the Getty Center, when it is put forward as the primary reason for our being and everybody is going to engage in it. Well, is everybody going to engage in it on the same level or on different levels, and to the same end? This isn't clear. Also the question has not been sufficiently clarified in my mind about the relationship of collection development as a process and activity, to research and scholarship as a process and activity. There are some people who without question understand what research and scholarship is, because they are scholars, and they have worked in archives with documents, and in libraries, and they know what it means to assemble facts and come to an assemblage of material with a hypothesis about a certain period or a genre or a person or a painting, or whatever. They look through these papers, and they either prove their hypothesis or they disprove it and come up

with another set of things and they publish and it's discussed and it becomes part of the body of knowledge of the world. That's scholarship. There's no question about that.

Then we have this large group of people with a substantial budget at their disposal, who are engaged in collection development. Does that activity in which they are engaged qualify in itself as a scholarly activity? Well it can, but it doesn't. In some cases it does, in some cases it does not, and in some cases there is a question. Now, is an effort going to be made to see to it that the process of collection development is going to be regulated, or controlled, so there is no question about the level of scholarly work involved? If that's true, that means the nature of collection development is going to be very different.

Sometimes, if you're buying a single text manuscript, which is the only kind that we buy, in contrast to what the museum buys, you could spend a very long time in the study of that one manuscript. It could be a very productive and marvelous time. Can the Getty afford that sort of activity? I don't know. If the budget is going to be very severely reduced, as it may, there is this cadre of people involved in collection development who need to be doing other things. They are not going to be able to apply themselves to spending that money, and maybe they shouldn't; maybe it ought to be reduced. It doesn't have to be reduced, but maybe it ought to be reduced for these reasons that I'm alluding to, so that these people can buy, from time to time,

a single text manuscript, which would require a great deal of research, exegesis, what have you. But does this preclude the Getty from investigating a scholar's papers? Let's say a scholar decides to retire, or he dies, and he's been a scholar of Scandinavian runes. We have such material. Suppose it came up now: the relationship of Scandinavian runes to other medieval subjects. How deeply do we want to go into that? How good was this scholar's scholarship? What do his papers reflect about the subject? How do they differ from the ones we already have? Do we need any more? This takes a lot of investigation. In addition, we have a huge body of material that has to be stored, processed and handled, and so on. I don't know to what extent these questions are being addressed.

SMITH: To what degree is there a parallel to what happened at the National Gallery? You worked there for ten years, building a collection almost from scratch.

EDELSTEIN: Right, oh yes, there's no question about that, much more from scratch than at the Getty. At the Getty there was a very good beginning.

SMITH: Is there a parallel process that you see? If there isn't, then we don't need to pursue this.

EDELSTEIN: No, let me just think for a minute. Yes, there was a parallel process, and I suppose that it's inevitable. By which I mean that any period of enormous activity has to be followed by a quieter, reflective, less energetic period. You might characterize it as a letdown, but it's a sort of decompression, where you absorb what

you've acquired, and reflect on what's been done. That sort of thing was at work at the National Gallery, and we see it now at the Getty. At the Getty of course it's complicated by other factors: a reduction in the money, the need to concentrate on the move to the new site, the loss of one director and the acquisition of another, which is a very big point that we haven't touched on—the role of Kurt Forster.

When I came to the National Gallery I was given the reins and told, "It's yours, go ahead." And I did, and I'm very proud of what I did, and I think the gallery is too. I had occasion to be at a dinner with [J.] Carter Brown, the former director, the other day, and I must say, I felt very happy, as anybody would, that he said publicly how pleased he was to see me—we hadn't seen each other for quite a long time—and that I was the man who had made the National Gallery of Art library the good library that it is. I admit, I confess, it was very nice to be recognized. I find it kind of hard to reconstruct how and when it stopped; it's almost like a physical thing, you know, you run out of emotions. You get up all this energy and then things sort of stop of their own accord. You can't move forever, there's no such thing as perpetual motion. And I think that's what happened at the National Gallery; everything ran out of steam. It was very different at the Getty. Kurt's resignation [changed the situation there]. Kurt selected me for this job. I never could learn from him how and why. I don't know what the panel of candidates looked like, but I've seen Kurt at work, I know how he operates, and how he selected other people, so I

can feel good about having been selected, because I know it was no casual or hurried thing on his part. He may give the impression of a man who never stops moving and works very fast, but the quality of the thought that he applies has no correlation to that; he's extraordinarily thoughtful and considerate in the literal sense. I don't think he acts hastily.

[Tape VIII, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: After my arrival, once Kurt had determined that I operated on the same wavelength that he did and my goals for the Getty were the same, in general, as his, he felt confident in my abilities and techniques and trustworthiness, and he gave me the go ahead, just as it had been at the National Gallery. He used to laugh about it, because he, after all, was the director, the boss. Occasionally, when we were dealing with large sums of money or large amounts of material, even though I knew I had the freedom to act as I thought right, I'd consult with him. But Kurt is the kind of person who, once having said something, stands by it—a good quality for the most part. Occasionally he would say, "You didn't have to ask me about that. Why did you do that?" Sometimes he would even show signs of impatience: why did I feel it was necessary to make a big deal out of something and take up his time with a question that he'd already answered? But I still thought it was necessary to do that sort of thing, and I would continue to do it today if we were in the same position.

With Kurt's departure things changed of course. The Getty Trust took a more

active role, and the way the staff worked together and who worked with whom and on what changed, so that the Trust's relationship to the collection development program and to me changed widely. On the one hand, there was much more surveillance, control, and supervision on the part of the Trust, and on the other hand there was a demand which was met, for a great deal more autonomy on the part of the staff. So the situation whereby collection development was pretty much the program that Kurt Forster and Tom Reese and I were developing for the Getty Center, became quite fragmented, and it remains fragmented today. The only way that it will change for the better—and as far as I'm concerned it has to change for the better—is to have someone again in a position to formulate and articulate a coherent collection development policy.

As I indicated, I hold strongly to the point of view that collections, great and not great, historically have been, and I think still are, the creations of individuals. If you have a lot of individuals, you might say that maybe you could have lots of great collections. I suppose that might be a possible ideal, but if you have a lot of individuals, all of whom are equal, and have cut up a pie in a more or less equal way, the likelihood that they will all work on the same basis, on the same level, and produce equally good work, is not very high. That's just the way life is, and you don't have to be very old or experienced to know that that's true. The likelihood that a group of bright, highly motivated, interested people, working in their own areas in

which they are expert, under the management of a disinterested, knowledgeable, capable person who tries on the one hand to keep the mission of the institution in mind, and on the other hand allows all of these individual programs and people to do their best under the given circumstances and coordinate those factors, then you have as close to the ideal that you can get. When the Getty Center can return again to that kind of configuration, it'll be back on track.

SMITH: I have a number of things I wanted to follow up on. You mentioned Jürgen Holstein, and you've had a close relationship with him obviously for many years. He seems to have been important a number of times at the Getty in terms of bringing you some of the very special things that you were getting hold of. Could you talk about him in the same way that you talked about André Jammes?

EDELSTEIN: I've known him since he first went into business. I was perhaps his first customer. I'm not sure of that, but if I wasn't the first I was the second. He started business in Frankfurt when I was at the National Gallery, and I can't remember the collection.

SMITH: The Ojetti?

EDELSTEIN: The Ojetti, good for you. It's nice to know that somebody reads these things. It was rather early on in my career at the National Gallery, and Holstein either contacted me or I heard about him. Of course I knew about Hugo Ojetti, you know, it was a very famous name, and I knew that there was an archive and a library. One

way or the other contact was made, and I went up to Charles Parkhurst, who was the assistant deputy director, and I said, "Look, this is an opportunity. I'd better go to Frankfurt." I remember I went at the time of the Frankfurt book fair, and so I bought like mad. Actually, I didn't even buy enough. I should have bought it all. I'll make a parenthetical statement here. Because I've had a long career, I of course made mistakes, everybody makes mistakes. But the only regrets that I have are for the things I did not acquire. It happened again and again and again. Anyway, we could have bought the whole thing, but be that as it may, we didn't.

Jürgen Holstein is different from the other dealers. First of all, he's German, and Germans are different from the French and Italians. He is a German with a conscience. He worries about being German, he worries about recent German history, he worries about everything. He is one of the most perceptive and learned individuals I've ever met. He can be devastatingly charming, and he can be boring as all hell. He can personify that German thoroughness and attention to detail that is just unbelievably stultifying. But at the same time the thoroughness that goes into it is admirable. Anyway, he has one of the keenest eyes for the right material that I know of. So over the years I have given him, for these two institutions, the National Gallery and the Getty, a lot of business, just as I've given Elmar Seibel, André Jammes, Carlo Alberto Chiesa, Jacques Vellekoop and John Vloemans, a dealer in Holland, a lot of business, plus many, many more. There are a dozen or so dealers

that stand out, and Holstein is one of them.

My relationship with Jürgen Holstein has been the subject of questioning and inquiry, and lack of favor on the part of a lot people at the Getty, I'm certain of it. But I'm also certain of the correctness of my judgment in what I've acquired and what I asked them to pay for this stuff. If I were still active and if I were in a position of authority with respect to buying, I would rely on Jürgen as much today as I ever did, and certain of these other people as well. I sense that by the very fact that you have his name in your notes that what has come up is East German material, right?

SMITH: The DDR material, yes.

EDELSTEIN: Well, the DDR acquisition is one of the proudest achievements that I've made in my whole life. What a lot of people don't understand, although I've tried to explain to them, is that it is as much my doing as it is Jürgen Holstein's. He didn't twist my arm to buy this material; this was a project that occurred to us over long periods of conversation and meetings and endless coffees and visits, he to California and I to Berlin. We jointly decided that here was what seemed like a marvelous opportunity: the East had opened up. Holstein had lots of contacts, and if he didn't have them, he'd make them; this is what he's superb at. Here I'm going to use the kinds of words that Eleanor uses as an anthropologist. Here was a separate culture that had existed for fifty years, cocoon-like, and all of a sudden there was a break in the cocoon. There was an opportunity to go in there and get everything that we

could to study that culture before the cocoon broke up, gone for ever.

Holstein saw the wisdom of this, and of course he saw the business potential. so he worked like a dog. He'd go into East Berlin day after day, looking up somebody who had been the minister for culture, or the publisher of a paper, or one thing or another. The charge that I gave him was to document, as much as possible and as closely as possible, the relationship of the arts to the politics of this unique culture. What happened? These people, being such good Germans, never threw a piece of paper away. Just like those who administered the concentration camps, who kept such fantastic lists of everybody that passed through the gates. Unbelievable, to document so thoroughly how they could do these evil things. These people kept everything: what was being censored, who was not allowed to make an exhibition, who could not publish magazines; I mean, it's unbelievably rich.

So, Holstein scoured East Berlin, and he scoured East Germany. He'd go off, and spend a week going from town to town, cellar to cellar, getting people to dig things out, paying them for it of course. I know what he paid, and I know to the pfennig what his profit was, and I know that he didn't get rich on the DDR material. I don't know why he didn't charge more. He made an honest, good profit, but it by no means was exorbitant. I started to buy this stuff, and I got a lot flack. "It's not art-related." And I would say, "What do you mean, it's not art-related? These are government proclamations and documents." There was a time in my life when

compromise was my middle name, not that compromise is a dirty word; life is a matter of compromise for the most part, but there was a time when I might have buckled under because of this criticism. The criticism got rather severe when I sent Nancy Perloff and Joanne Paradise on separate occasions to look at more DDR stuff. We were supposed to be a team, after all. Well, neither one of them came back with any great enthusiasm, and I got a very disappointing reaction from Jürgen Holstein, who wanted to know why I had inflicted these people upon him who had no idea about the value and the interest of the stuff that he was showing them. He told me if he had to go through these gyrations, it wasn't worth it to him. I understood exactly what he meant, because I was being put through the same gyrations. But in this case I was so certain that I was right that I persevered and I forced this acquisition to go through.

I'm still forcing it to go through, but not with the same energy, because you reach a saturation point. The job was completed, and Jürgen and I vacuumed it up. Jürgen found underground publications, exhibit announcements, catalogs —unbelievable stuff. Nobody else has it. No one else in the world, not in Germany, anywhere, has the documentation of this fifty-year period in this weird East German culture that we have at the Getty Center. Someday, maybe long after all of us are gone, someone may use this. That's a consideration that should never come up. I don't collect things for a particular scholar's use, or because I know it's going to be

used tomorrow. I have a very big picture, and it includes infinity. But someday it'll be discovered. That's the nature of a library, and an archive. It may be searched out deliberately, or it may be discovered by some happy serendipitous accident.

SMITH: And I would assume it'll be discovered sooner rather than later.

EDELSTEIN: Absolutely; it's getting a lot of attention. I knew that I had a lot of backing. Kurt had left, but I consulted with him and he was very enthusiastic. Martin Warnke, in Hamburg, bought everything that the Getty did not buy. Horst Bredekamp, who was the number two consideration for the director of the Getty Center after Salvatore Settis, can't wait for an opportunity to come to Santa Monica and work with this stuff. Thomas Gaehtgens thought it was unbelievably brilliant that I could get all this stuff. There were many, many other people whose positive opinion I was proud to have.

I don't know what more to tell you. I did not make myself popular, but that's never been my goal anyway. If people respect me, or appreciate something, or praise me, I react just like most people do—I love praise, I glow. But that's not my purpose, so I just pushed this acquisition through. I had help pushing it through from Tommy Reese, but I didn't have as much help as I would have liked. When Salvatore Settis got there and heard about it, he called me in to find out what the hell was going on, you know—"What is all this stuff?" I told him the same story that I'm telling you and putting on record. Salvatore works very closely with Martin Warnke and with

Horst Bredekamp; they're together on the Marburg Project and various other things, and he heard only good things about it from them. So Settis gave me his full support and backing.

This acquisition spanned a long period of time—it didn't all come in as one big purchase—and it amounted to a lot of money, no question about it. So I consulted with Tommy and Tommy always said, "Yes of course, absolutely, go ahead." What he did not do, which I would have preferred and welcomed, was to come up to one of the collection development meetings, or just to call a meeting, and say, "Look, I've given Mel an okay on this, so let's cut the crap and all the sniping and get to work." That's what I would have liked to have happened. It didn't. He was agreeable and he countersigned the papers—these were big figures, well over my signature authority—and they went up to the Trust, and then I got the usual questions from them: What is this stuff? Why are you buying it? Why does it cost so much? And so on and so on. It was boring and repetitious, but that's the way of the world. As I said before, I wouldn't think of objecting to having to justify what I do to the proper authorities. But if somebody had stood behind me, and said, "We think Mel's right," [it may have been easier], but nobody's ever done that. Not to this day, that I know of. So that's the story on the DDR and Jürgen Holstein.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you about the role of book fairs.

EDELSTEIN: Oh, book fairs. But first, I was just going to say, it was interesting

that I should get a phone call, in the midst of our talking, about a man that I had mentioned to you, who has been very important to me in my career. I don't think I told you anything [specific] about Chiesa. He is on the really top rung of dealers in the world, very specialized and particular. He's the cream of the crop, quite a gentleman, and has beautiful stuff. There is a sale coming up on December 8, at Sotheby's in New York, which is going to be one of the sales of the century, of early Italian illustrated books that belonged to a man named Otto Schäfer, in Germany. The story of Otto Schäfer is a very interesting one. He was an industrialist, I think he was the ball bearing king of the world, certainly of Europe. He had a career that nobody wants to acknowledge. I'm sure that he bankrolled Hitler and his buddies substantially. He amassed an enormous fortune, much of which he put into books and art, and he put together one of the great collections that has ever been assembled of illustrated books, including block books. Block books are the books that preceded printing in movable type. An entire page would be cut from a wood block and printed. These block books are very rare, especially those that had the beauty and the fine condition of Otto Schäfer's. I think he had six, which is unheard of. There aren't all that many left. So it's one of the great collections of the world.

Well, with the opening of the east, Otto Schäfer did what a lot of German industrialists and financiers from all of the world did. He rushed into East Germany to see if he could make a killing. He bought up factories and one thing or another.

The East German culture, having been isolated from the rest of Germany and from the rest of the world for such a long time, was not quite ready for Schäfer. You can't get people to work in the way that you've been accustomed to having them work if they've never done it before. People who for fifty years were accustomed to being coddled, and given everything, people who got a salary whether they worked well or didn't work well, all of a sudden having to punch a time clock and really produce.

To make a long story short, Schäfer went bust. He went so far bust that he has to get rid of his entire collection, which is massive. The director of his collection, his librarian, came to me while I was still at the Getty, through various intermediaries, and then directly, and we had the opportunity to buy the entire collection in one fell swoop. I struggled with this, and finally I went to Harold Williams. I wrote him a long memorandum and I went to him personally. I had a big book truck filled with these enormous catalogs that had been published about the Otto Schäfer collection. He had a separate building for it; it was just unbelievable, gorgeous. We could have bought the whole thing—now this is going to astonish you, I'm sure—at a remarkable, bargain basement price of $40,000,000. I went to Harold and said, "Look. Twice, overnight, the museum entered a new field of collecting. When they established the department of photography they bought three [major] collections, and overnight the Getty museum became one of *the* museums for photography. The same thing happened when the Getty bought the Otto Ludwig collection of illuminated

manuscripts. Here is another opportunity to make the Getty Center the equal of anything that's on the east coast, except perhaps the Morgan Library. You certainly will have a collection which is as good, and in some respects even better than the [Lessing J.] Rosenwald Collection at the Library of Congress."

I gave it a very hard sell, but it didn't work. I was told we didn't have the money. It's not my place to question that. I thought it was the wrong decision, but that's the way it goes. I tried. I didn't turn away from the effort with just one refusal, that's not my way. There was no way to do it. I tried to get other people to help in the effort and nothing worked. This was a year or so ago, maybe more now. So you take the lumps and you forget them and you go on to other things. And now the Otto Schäfer collection is being dispersed. He worked out an arrangement with the German government so that all the German material, including the great block books, will stay in Germany. He's being allowed to sell everything else. The sale will take several years. The December 8 sale coming up will include Italian books from his library, so I have been in touch with Salvatore and Tommy and all the right people at the Getty, and I told them that was brought to my attention by Carlo Alberto Chiesa, who knows these books better than anybody. He would be the man to do the bidding for us if we could buy. I wanted the list checked and if they could get back to me in time I would go down to New York to check the material out myself in terms of condition, and maybe we could get one or two. I haven't heard anything yet. They've

got to get busy. This is the way things go.

[Tape IX, Side One]

SMITH: I had raised the question of book fairs.

EDELSTEIN: Well, first of all, I should say that since the sixteenth century, when they really took off, book fairs have been a staple of the book trade. A good book fair can be an extraordinary learning experience for the people attending, in addition of course to being the source of interesting things that can be acquired. There's going to be a book fair later this month, on the eighteenth. Here's the special Boston Book Fair issue of the *Bookman's Weekly*. This is a very important [event], because you can see in one place what otherwise would take a round-the-world trip.

SMITH: I would assume that you already know most, if not all of the dealers.

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, I know them all, and they know me. There are dealers that you want to see and dealers you want to avoid. Sometimes you're successful and sometimes not. But it's a marvelous opportunity to see so much material and so many people in one place—to talk, to compare, and to make yourself known. If you're a younger person in the profession, you want to be known, and you want your institution to be known. You want people to know what you're looking for and what your standards are. You want a dealer to know that when he says a book is in good condition, you are going to apply your criteria for "good" against his, and this is a chance to say, "Look, buddy, you may think this is good, but I think it's poor," and

you show him why. They are as much interested in learning as you are, because they may want to sell that book now, but if there's a modicum of intelligence on their part they're not in business just for that moment. They want to be on good terms with you and they want to give you something that you will approve of, and they won't say "good" to you again if they know that that condition is not good; they'll say "fair" or whatever they can come up with. So it's that kind of thing.

You need a lot of stamina for book fairs. The Boston fair is one of the better ones in this country, and then the big New York fairs are in April. The fairs in Stuttgart and Cologne are fantastic. It is not uncommon at fairs to find several copies of the same book. It's a wonderful experience, especially for younger people, to see this happen, especially if you bought the first one, and then you see somewhere else a better copy at a lesser price, and then yet again you see not only a better copy at a lesser price but one with a fantastic binding or a marvelous inscription or it has some extraordinarily mysterious provenance or an extraordinarily interesting provenance, that kind of thing. It can be shocking and upsetting, especially if you've already bought it, but it's a wonderful experience. I've always encouraged students and younger colleagues to attend book fairs.

SMITH: When you were at the Getty, how many of these fairs did you attend?

EDELSTEIN: I'd go to as many as was physically and conveniently possible. The Los Angeles book fair is a very, very good one. If you're interested in California, it

alternates yearly between Los Angeles and San Francisco; they're big and they're very good. I understand they've started a book fair in Santa Monica. Every week there's a list of fairs in the *Bookman's Weekly*. They're not all worth going to. Everybody knows that in the springtime there is the annual fair in New York, which I mentioned. It's enormous and very important. When I was young in the profession, sometimes I'd make special trips. It was worthwhile, that's how one learns. But then later on, if I had to be in Boston for some other reason, I would schedule it at the time of the Boston Book Fair and that way I could do both. In recent years I haven't made special trips to fairs. I get tired, and I don't have the stamina that I had at one time. You have to be on your feet, and you do a lot of talking. If you represent an institution that buys, or if the dealers know you and know your tastes and interests, they'll grab you. It's a game, it's a dance, it's stimulating. Especially for young people just out of school. They think they know a lot, and they do, but they know more when they run into solid rock experience, and very often that happens at book fairs. It's lively and it can be a lot of fun. The members of the book trade are an extraordinarily convivial group. They're not like art dealers. As the phrase goes, some of my best friends are art dealers; they too can be convivial, but the members of the book trade are different.

SMITH: What about the question of competition? Is it normal to offer something to one prospective buyer only, or could there be a situation where a dealer will say, "If

you don't take this, then somebody else will"?

EDELSTEIN: Any dealer who offers the same thing to more than one potential buyer at the same time is not going to last very long, because not only is the community of dealers a close-knit one, as I've just indicated, and a convivial one, but the rare book world itself, or the book world, which is larger, is still a tight-knit small group. It's very hard to keep a secret, and everybody knows what's going on. A dealer who would do something like that is cutting his throat. To go back to Grabar, we are under the gun because Mr. Seibel has other buyers lined up for the Grabar books. He told me this because he wants to put pressure, but that's a perfectly legitimate thing to do, and I knew it anyway. All you have to do is use your imagination and just think a little bit about it. So sometimes a dealer will say, "If you don't buy it, I've got somebody else standing in the wings." This is a perfectly ordinary legitimate technique, but you don't make the offer to someone else at the same time; that is a definite no no.

SMITH: Okay. I'd like to go back a little bit. You mentioned the other day that you thought Franklin Murphy had an awful lot to do with your coming to the Getty.

EDELSTEIN: No, I wouldn't put it that way. My connections with Murphy, as you know, go back to UCLA. I don't have to tell you what an extraordinary man he was. We got to know each other at UCLA very well, and we remained close after he left his position as chancellor and went to the Times Mirror. And then Carter Brown

brought me to the National Gallery, and who was on the board of trustees of the National Gallery but Franklin Murphy? I was in charge of the library and the photo archive, which was very closely related to the Kress Foundation. And who was the president of the Kress Foundation but Franklin Murphy? So, during my years at the National Gallery we saw each other often, in Washington and New York. I came out to California quite a lot while I was at the National Gallery, for the book fairs and various other things, and then the offer came from the Getty. It was not an offer in which Murphy participated, but once I was there, then our relationship resumed, and it was a very close one until he left the board of trustees. He would invite me down to Times Mirror for lunch and we would talk about things. Murphy was one of the people that I asked to speak up for the Otto Schäfer collection, and he did his best, he tried. I talked to him often about the Murphy-Ahmanson collecting for UCLA. He asked my opinion and my advice sometimes, as did Jim Davis, and David Zeidberg at UCLA, both of whom are friends of mine. So Franklin Murphy was in my life to an enormous extent, and I miss him enormously. People like that are very rare. To my knowledge he was not instrumental in bringing me to the Getty, but once he knew that that was in the works, then he was all for it, and he was extraordinarily helpful.

In the early days, while he was still an active member of the board, I went to him many times. He played a very crucial role in the museum's acquisition of the Ludwig manuscripts. My experience, of course, is not unique. I'm sure many people

would say the same thing about Murphy. He was the man you could always count on for support, but it wasn't unqualified support. Franklin Murphy was no patsy. He wasn't one of these people who thought any book was automatically good; he was no fool. You had to explain what you were doing, you had to justify why you wanted you wanted his help in spending umpteen millions of dollars for something, and once he understood and agreed, then he was fantastic. A rare type.

SMITH: You didn't actually have an art history background when you started in this.

EDELSTEIN: No, never.

SMITH: Though you did have a strong background in Italian Renaissance.

EDELSTEIN: I never took a course in art history. Not even Art History 101, or whatever it's called. I don't know whether it's in that interview that I did for the National Gallery or not, but it's just a short story, so I'll tell you. When Carter Brown came out to Los Angeles, he interviewed me in the Beverly Hills Hotel, where he was staying, and he laid out the plans for the east wing and told me all about this exciting Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts—CASVA—that they were going to put in there, and the library they wanted to build. Then he said to me, "I've come to ask you who you would recommend for this job." I said, "Well, I don't know, I'll think about it." And he said, "How about you?" I told him it sounded marvelous, but I wasn't an art historian. I asked him if he knew that, and he said, "Yes, I know that, that's why we want you." This conversation was repeated with Kurt Forster,

who was even more definite in his response. In essence, they both said that there were a lot of art historians they could find. They said they wanted someone who was a humanist, a historian, someone who knew languages, who had a good general education and was at home in many fields. Whether they were right about my individual qualifications is for somebody else to say, but they were right in terms of the general characteristics they were looking for.

SMITH: Was it a hard decision to leave the National Gallery?

EDELSTEIN: No. I had done what I came there to do. At the end of those ten years they had a great library, they had more than they bargained for. I was pleased and satisfied, and things had changed. The money wasn't there anymore, the impetus wasn't there any more, the climate had changed.

SMITH: The Getty sought you out, correct?

EDELSTEIN: The Getty sought me out. The invitation came out of the blue, I had no idea about it whatsoever.

SMITH: It came directly from Kurt Forster?

EDELSTEIN: I don't even remember. Harold got in on the act, and Nancy Englander, his wife, who was still a member of his staff at the time. I don't know what her title or role was. I got a phone call or a letter or both, inviting me out. So I came out, and after I returned home, I got a telephone call from Harold's office saying that Nancy Englander was going to be in Washington, and could I have breakfast with

her on such and such a morning? I did, and we had a long interview. She asked me lots of questions, very specific, and then I came out to the Getty again for another look-see, and I met the staff and talked with them.

SMITH: What was the definition of the job you would have and the goals that you were supposed to be operating within?

EDELSTEIN: There was a library and there was a photo archive. It had been building before I came, for about two years, under the direction of Anne-Mieke Halbrook. She did a very good job. She had the help of people like Elmar Seibel at Ars Libri, and Jacques Vellekoop at Goldschmidt; those two were extremely influential in the acquisitions that she made. She bought big collections. The Getty had the money and they were in a hurry and that was the way to do it. For the most part she bought well and wisely, and they counseled her well and wisely. But there was no pattern.

My conversations with Harold Williams were rather vague. Mostly he asked me questions about myself and my interests and my abilities, my background and experience, and that sort of thing. My conversations with Kurt were not so much conversations as they were classes in which Kurt told me what he thought about scholarship, books, photographs, art history, the future of the Getty, the mission of the Getty, his plans for it, and so on. I didn't say very much; I didn't have an opportunity to say very much. That's Kurt's nature, and he has his own ways of

judging people with whom he's in contact, even if they don't have very much to say, or the opportunity to say very much. I think he's very clever at that, he's very sharp. I have an enormous respect for him. I think he was absolutely the right person for the Getty at the right time, and I think it was a serious loss when he left.

I listened to what everyone was saying very carefully. It wasn't until I was there and had taken stock of things that I developed a program. Which may have been the wrong way to do it, but I came there really on faith more than anything else, because these conversations were either vague, or too specific, or tremendously abstract.

SMITH: But you were not to build an art history library?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, this was very clear, and I was very happy about that. I knew that from day one.

SMITH: What about your relationship to the library and what would become special collections? Was that clear from day one?

EDELSTEIN: Well, not day one, but early on, yes.

SMITH: But you had control of their budgets, as I understand.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, it caused problems, it caused friction.

SMITH: And that budget control was part of your job definition?

EDELSTEIN: Right, right.

SMITH: How did you feel about the budgetary process? You came in when they

were still actively doing the zero-based budget process?

EDELSTEIN: I felt very good about the budget process, initially. It changed of course, but initially it was wonderful. I had a fantastic budget, and I felt very good about it from day one. But from early on I was in control of it, and this caused problems. Forgive me if I say this myself, but I think I did a good job of controlling spending and apportioning the budget, and I did a very fair job of seeing to it that everybody else who had a right and an obligation to deal with the budget had what they needed. I didn't keep everything in my own pocket, for sure.

SMITH: What were your ideas initially about the balance between acquiring new books as they're getting published, serials, and then the special purchases?

EDELSTEIN: That was never a problem. The library always had what it needed under my tenure. I am very much oriented toward the role of journals and serials in a research library; I have always believed you can never have too many. I did weed a lot of stuff out, right away, very quickly. There was discussion about it, and disagreement about it, but I proceeded with what I thought was correct.

I can remember the rather acrimonious discussions about all of the *Vogues*: the Paris *Vogue*, the Rome *Vogue*, the New York *Vogue*. I don't know how many there were, but I thought that this was not necessary, and I still think I was right. But there was a very nice young man named David H. Cohen, who unfortunately died of AIDS. He worked with Gillian Wilson in the decorative arts section of the museum,

and he took the point of view that every edition of *Vogue* was essential to the record of fashion as an aspect of the decorative arts. I took exception to this, and a number of people agreed with me. So we had a lot of discussions about that kind of thing, but the new book program and the serials program got their due share.

SMITH: So they just continued as they had been—

EDELSTEIN: Well, no, they didn't just continue. I monitored them very closely in the early years, very closely. Blanket order programs were reviewed much more carefully than they had been. A lot more stuff began to be sent back than had been before. When I had the time, in the early days, and occasionally later, I'd review the shipments and would mark quite a lot of things for return; for example, the Italian edition of a book on Italian gardens, which had already been published in England. It was beautiful, but totally unnecessary. At the Getty Center the readers know how to read Italian, French, German, and Spanish, and all sorts of other things, and if they don't then they should be somewhere else doing their work. That's putting it in a very high-handed way, but we had the English editions for a lot of things because the fact of life is that not everybody does know all the languages that perhaps they should know or would like to know. Times are different, and they're changing fast.

Early on I discovered that the Getty Center did not own the collected works of Goethe in any language. I think Goethe is one of the most important figures in Western civilization. So we got the best critical edition in German, and then we got

the best critical English translation. I read German, and a lot of other people read German, but there are a lot of people who don't. We didn't have a collected Nietzsche either, and you can speculate endlessly about where twentieth-century critical theory starts, but a good place to start is Nietzsche. So we got the collected works of Nietzsche in German, but we also got it in English. I could go on and on. So I never thought that the allocations between old and new books, or serials, all that kind of thing, was a problem. It never seemed to be a problem. If there was any dissatisfaction it never came to my attention.

SMITH: How much experience had you had in personal papers acquisition?

EDELSTEIN: Well, a fair bit at the Library of Congress, and a little bit at the National Gallery. We did a lot of that at the Getty, an enormous amount.

SMITH: So that was the place where you really began to focus on those kinds of interests?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, much more, yes. I was in the Rare Book Division at the Library of Congress, and then, you know, there is that enormous manuscript division there. But I didn't do it on the scale that I did at the Getty.

SMITH: With papers, of course, you could go in any direction. Were acquisitions of papers largely determined by discussions between you, Tommy, and Kurt?

EDELSTEIN: No, I found things that were available, or I would ask, and I would encourage them to be available. I went to scholars and asked them what they were

going to do with their papers. They would tell me and ask why I wanted to know. I would say, "I know where you will find a good home for them. This is what we do at the Getty Center." I'd explain how we would take care of them and make them available to scholars. You look around and see who's about to retire, who's died. There's a certain amount of ambulance chasing to this kind of thing too, in a genteel way. You ask people to keep an eye out for you. I said to John Vloemans in Holland, "How about designers, or architects?" And that's how we got the [J. J. P.] Oud papers. He came up with them. This was very early on. [R.] Nicholas Olsberg, who was running special collections when I came and now is at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, had already been doing this. I didn't initiate it.

SMITH: But you took over responsibility for that?

EDELSTEIN: Yes.

SMITH: How long did Olsberg remain after you came?

EDELSTEIN: About two years, something like that.

SMITH: And then Don Anderle became head of special collections?

EDELSTEIN: No. Olsberg and special collections are separate subjects, really. When I got there Nick Olsberg was in charge of what was called the archives; it wasn't called special collections then. His professional training I think was as an archivist. So Nick and the archives should be distinguished from the Getty Archive, which was a title made up by Kurt Forster. Nick had been brought in as a consultant

on the establishment of archives and the Getty Archive per se. In the Getty Center is the archive of the Getty Trust, or it's supposed to be there, but that's a whole other kettle of fish. That's very badly managed. No one oversees it properly. I early on decided that I would not get into that because it seemed like an endless and fruitless endeavor, so I didn't pay any attention, and no one else pays attention to what's going on with that.

So, anyway, Nick was brought in as a consultant, and he stayed and ran the archives, which developed into the place that collected and organized and serviced and made accessible the manuscript and archival holdings of the Getty Center. Nick was energetic about acquiring things; he got lots of architectural drawings, and papers of architects, starting with a big Frank Lloyd Wright project. He ran a good ship. Well, I arrived, and I don't know any other way to say it except I guess I spoiled the fun. First of all, by virtue of my position, what had been an easy and direct relationship between Nick and Kurt Forster was done away with.

[Tape IX, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: I occupied a position in between. Certainly people did go directly to Kurt from time to time, as they thought the situation demanded, but more routinely, Nick had to report to me. So this changed the situation and I controlled the purse strings. It was made very clear between Kurt and me from the beginning that I would oversee the spending of the collection development budget, because that was the

practical way to get control of the direction of collection development; it had to be done in those terms. While Nick and others would still have a great deal of freedom and leeway with respect to how their appropriations would be spent, it would require my signature up to a certain point, and beyond that it had to go to Kurt, or Tommy, or both. Even Kurt's signature authority had limits, beyond which the Trust was consulted. These are the normal S.O.P.s for this sort of thing in most institutions.

Nick and I got along very well in personal and professional terms. Nick is a bright and witty guy and he's very sophisticated. We had a number of interests in common. But he wasn't happy with the new situation, and this was perfectly understandable. He had had a playing field to himself, and it was now occupied by lots of other people. I think he fretted under my restrictions and there did come a time when I vetoed quite a number of things. I thought there was an overemphasis in certain areas and an underemphasis in other areas, and of course the way that had to be expressed was by disallowing certain acquisitions that he wanted to make. Then, as things progressed, he began to be more and more inattentive to his duties and responsibilities, and this had to be brought to his attention. I think this was an inevitable, or understandable, I should say, expression of his growing discontent.

So, in due course, Nick announced that he was leaving and he had another job. Everybody, including Nick, breathed a sigh of relief, because we could see it coming, and it was the right thing for him to do, although in personal terms, because

he was immensely likeable, people were sorry that he wasn't there. But there it was, it was time for him to go. I hope he's done well and is happy where he is. I don't think he likes Montreal very much and I wouldn't blame him. It can be attractive in parts, but it's such a provincial society. The Canadian Centre for Architecture could be a great institution, but it has had administrative problems. So I don't know how he's doing, but I hope okay and I hope he's prospering.

SMITH: So then Don Anderle came in—

EDELSTEIN: Not for a long time. The business of my title is really funny. When I came around to be interviewed for this job, in one of my conversations with Kurt Forster, he said, "You know, I hate the titles here. I don't like these administrative titles. I'm not going to have another assistant director, I've already got two assistant directors and an associate director. You're going to have a different title." I said, "Oh? What's my title going to be?" He said, "Your title is going to be The Navigator." He was serious, so it took a lot to talk him out of it. He finally came around, and the next thing I know I'm saddled with this long and cumbersome title of Senior Bibliographer and Resource Coordinator. I hated it. It's a mouthful. And people would say, "Well now, what does that mean? What is a senior bibliographer? And if you're the senior, who are the juniors?" Well, very good questions. The art historians didn't want to be called bibliographers, because "bibliographer" sounds like something that would have to do with libraries and librarians, and it was very implicit

that they were a lower, lesser breed. This kind of conflict had reverberations for a very long time, long after my title was settled upon—almost down to the present. So there were no other bibliographers, but I was "Senior Bibliographer." And what is a resource coordinator? Well, I never had a clear indication of what a resource coordinator was. It just sort of developed; it was sprung on me, I had no advance warning that this was going to be part of my title.

SMITH: But you knew what you were supposed to do.

EDELSTEIN: I knew what I was supposed to do. But as things developed, I surveyed and took note of the organization of the Getty Center: the library, the archives, and the photo archive. When I came they were three separate units, three separate staffs, each of them doing its own ordering, keeping its own records, operating on two separate online systems with little if any communication among them, quarreling with one another about where reference books that should have been communal would go.

There were meetings and that sort of thing, but they came to nothing. So I began to write memoranda, and to talk in meetings and to Kurt, and I stressed what everybody knew of course; they didn't need me to point it out. But, as in the history of every organization, the time comes when you have to do something about the problems, and that time was when I arrived, so I brought these things into a focus that had not existed before. I would say things like, "We've got to get together and merge

materials; the duplication is cumbersome and expensive and unnecessary and inefficient, and it all ought to be one." And Kurt would say, "Exactly, exactly. You took the words right out of my mouth." Kurt, perhaps like many administrators or managers in such a position, seeing that he had somebody on the staff who was a take charge kind of person, was only too happy to let it happen. This is particularly true of Kurt, who had lots of other things on his mind, and lots of other activities in which he constantly participated—to the envy of most other people most of the time.

So I began to take care of problems to the extent that I could, and this went on for quite a long time. This also became a bitter pill that Nick had to swallow, and I'm sure he resented [this consolidation], as did other people in their areas. The outlines of what came to be called the famous "reorganization" began to take shape in my mind and in that of others. It became more and more apparent that it really needed to be done in a scientific and disciplined way, and I took on bits and pieces of it. At the same time I was doing what I considered my principal job: directing the collection development. It's just a matter of record that there had been this quite large and significant collection development that had preceded me. But when I arrived and began to get settled and really went to work, it steamrolled. There was a lot of money that first year or two, and lots of opportunities, and I had blanketed my so-called network with invitations to let me know what's going on. I got a big response, and lots of wonderful things came in.

I began to get more and more nervous about this "Resource Coordinator" role that was beginning to overwhelm me. On top of which, I did not have the technical know-how to handle a lot of it. I could use a PC for the usual purposes, I knew about networking in a technical sense, and I knew what online systems were all about in a theoretical way, but I wasn't an expert in any of this, and I'm not a cataloger or a classifier. My library school training, as I said at one point to you, was short and concentrated, and I just skimmed. I got good grades and all of that, but they didn't indicate how little I knew. Even if I had known a great deal twenty or whatever years before, I certainly didn't know it then, in '86. I've forgotten a lot more than I ever knew, which wasn't much to begin with. I wasn't really terribly interested in having to relearn. I had more than a sufficient number of personnel and administrative questions in the area of collection development alone, and I didn't need more.

I finally said to Tommy, to Kurt, to Lynn O'Leary Archer, "Look, this won't do. We need to be reorganized. The merging of these three units must be undertaken, people need to be moved around, responsibilities need to be redefined, reapportioned—all those things that reorganization implies. We can't do it alone here. I'm not prepared, equipped, or qualified to do it, on top of which I don't want to. Being the head of collection development is a full time job in itself." They didn't say, "We agree with you." They said, "Of course. We've been thinking the same thing." I was just stating the obvious. So we set about getting consultant after

consultant after consultant, to advise us on the reorganization. We listened, we took notes, we discussed, and this went on for ages. All right. So we came up with a plan for reorganization, and the merging of these units. The library was no longer allowed to be called the library, which I think is a terrible mistake; it's the Resource Department now. There's no more photo archive. The "Archives" of course was a misnomer to begin with; it was very confusing. If the files on that reorganization were on shelves, they would probably take up that whole wall. It all took maybe two years. I can't remember now because I wanted to put all of that so far out of my mind. It was a long and tedious and sometimes very painful process because not everybody agreed.

SMITH: Was this also when the department of collection development was formed?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, that was the whole thing. You see, that was one of the most obvious necessities; it became obvious to me, and no doubt to others, but they didn't express it much earlier on, because here I was in charge of this amorphous body, so the people whom I had to call on for their subject expertise and their help were scattered in all sorts of nooks and crannies all over the Center. So we went through this painful, long process of consultants and meetings, site visits, on and on and on. We finally ironed out a reorganization scheme. In that scheme we established a new slot to be occupied by somebody who would be called assistant director of or for the resource department. We set about on a long and difficult international search for the

person. The big division of opinion revolved around whether we were going to get an art historian with a Ph.D., or somebody who knew libraries and archives and all the technical stuff that goes with them. On the table were such issues as: what kind of electronic conversion system were we going to adapt, and what kind of circulation system were we going to subscribe to? These are questions which still need answers and can be debated ad nauseam—and were debated ad nauseam. So that battle was fought hard and long, and I think it was like two prize fighters who knock each other out. I think that's really what happened.

SMITH: It struck me that this has been a long-standing conflict within the Getty as a whole, the question of what I would think of as the fetishization of the art history Ph.D.—having people who are Ph.D.'d art historians doing work that hasn't practically to do with art history except that it's at the Getty. I've always been puzzled by this.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, yes, you're exactly right, and to complicate the puzzlement is the contradiction: how can a man like Kurt Forster, with the mind that he has, who doesn't do things by rote, who is imaginative and creative and unusual in so many ways, be stuck, himself, in so conventional and unimaginative an approach as to insist that certain people have a Ph.D? The fact that I don't have a Ph.D. has occupied my mind for a very long time. I wish I did. In my history there were innumerable opportunities to resume, and I could have done it. I could do it now, with no

problem whatsoever, I'm sure. But I probably won't. I could understand insisting on it if one could vouch for the standards that are applied in giving people Ph.D.s, but I know what those standards are in many places, and I know a lot of people with Ph.D.s who are the biggest horse's asses you can find. It isn't just a matter of them being ridiculous people, they don't know any of the things that you would expect a Ph.D. in a certain subject area to know. They're ignorant. I'm really getting off the subject, but that contradiction always disturbed me.

SMITH: Do you think it came from the Trust?

EDELSTEIN: No, I don't think so. I think this was internal to the Getty Center. Anyway, we batted this around and around, and I made my position clear. We interviewed and studied and met with people and so on. We had some very good people, among the tons and tons of others that were impossible, but nothing worked out. At some point we put an ad in the *New York Times*. Actually, it was done at my insistence, because in the Sunday Week in Review section there are a lot of academic ads. They're very expensive. We had hired this head-hunting firm that could retire on what they made from the Getty alone. They saw people from all over the country, and at one of our interminable meetings I said, "Well, look, I think we should put an ad in the *New York Times*, and my argument overcame the argument about the cost. The ad in the *New York Times* is what did it. Donald Anderle saw it, he applied, we invited him out for an interview, I interviewed him in New York, and he was hired.

He was a compromise. As I told you before, I am not opposed to compromise, but in his case I think it was a compromise that was based on exhaustion. I think everybody, I included, had been just about wiped out by this dual process: first the year and a half that we spent on the reorganization scheme, and then what seemed to become an endless dilemma about who we were going to put into that job.

I had a couple of candidates, one in particular who I thought would be superb, and they were voted down. So I was sort of feeling, what the hell. I think everybody was worried about the time it was taking and the fact that the reorganization, which this person was going to institute and supervise, was not being done. The staff was getting restless, and the Center was being criticized by people from other entities in the Trust, so we had to make a decision. Maybe this guy isn't perfect, but he knows libraries, he had a long career at the New York Public Library, and he's supervised lots of people. And he made a nice impression when he came out. Okay. Well, I want to step very gingerly from now on, on this subject. I don't think I can escape what must be already known to you, or you wouldn't even have brought it up. Don Anderle and I simply do not see things in the same way, and I felt rather quickly that perhaps we had made a mistake. I believe that we did make a mistake. I wasn't aware until much later that Don Anderle's opinion of me was equally poor. I don't think he has much use for me or my role or my opinions at all.

SMITH: But you were in charge.

EDELSTEIN: But I wasn't in charge of him. I was in charge of a big budget, and I was in charge of the development of the collections. People listened to me, and I played a large role in the meetings of the senior staff. I was in a position of authority, and this impinged on his areas of responsibility more and more. As time passed, and money became less, some of the cracks in the reorganization were becoming wider, and some of its faults were becoming more obvious, and a lot of this was expressed on both our parts in dissatisfaction with each other. I became increasingly [frustrated] with the fact that the subjects of interest to Mr. Anderle, such as questions of space and shelving and processing and moving, were increasingly becoming the dominant concerns of people to whom I had to go for signatures and authorizations. I was beginning to fight a rearguard action more and more, and my authority was becoming weaker. On top of which, the Trust began to drop its support of the budget more and more, and it continues to do so. The reorganization had created precisely what we had attempted to do away with before: these arbitrary divisions within the staff, suspicions, jealousies, and rivalries. The divisions were different, and units had different names, but nevertheless, the same problems were still there and very obvious. I was having a hard time handling this; it couldn't be handled under the existing circumstances, and there was no way to change it. I have expressed all this publicly, and it's no secret to most people at the Getty. I'm not very sanguine about the future of the Getty Center when it's in the hands of technicians and bureaucrats,

and it worries me that it may be that at present.

So these were factors, but not predominant factors, in my decision to retire. My decision to retire, like a lot of big decisions that one makes in one's life, was a complex one. I've worked very hard all my life, despite my spoiled childhood and youth, and in many ways, although I felt that I was performing a useful role and service, I was getting tired of doing the same thing. I was even getting tired of all that traveling that I was constantly doing. It always sounded very glamorous, flying off to Rome and London and Paris and Prague and meeting all these interesting people, but it was hard work, and I had to be alert all the time. I took all that very seriously. In addition to not having as much money, I was worn down a little bit by some of the criticism. I spoke very boldly earlier about the DDR acquisition, saying I knew I was right, I knew how important it was, I knew how great it was going to be for scholarship in the future and how much glory it would bring to the Getty and all of that. Nevertheless, you take these criticisms and these blows, and they sort of add up. So I was getting tired of that and I was getting tired of having to constantly explain, and not feel that I really had won anybody over. Criticism of that acquisition in particular still goes on to the present.

SMITH: I was told that the curatorial staff felt they had to do anything they could to stop it.

EDELSTEIN: I don't doubt it. Well, they didn't succeed. I don't think the Getty

Center knows how lucky it was that I put that through. I didn't have Kurt Forster to fall back on either. If Kurt had been there it would have been a lot easier, and he would have put a stop to this carping. That's why I was a little disappointed that Tommy didn't help more, because he kept saying to me that he agreed. In any case, there were a lot of factors, and then, you know, I'm not a spring chicken anymore. I've got other projects that I want to do. I thought, "Well, I'm going to be seventy years old. I've reached that legendary biblical age, and it's time to do other things." I was also concerned about Eleanor. She's only a year younger than I, and she's strong in many, many ways, but her health is not the strongest; there's a certain fragility there. We had also gotten a little bored and tired with life in Los Angeles.

[Tape X, Side One]

EDELSTEIN: Los Angeles is not what it used to be. When we first came it was alive. We had a lovely house in Venice, on one of the old canals, and it's even lovelier since they fixed up the canals. But we couldn't walk out at night, and until Eleanor's accident we used to always go for walks. You know, there were drive-by shootings in the neighborhood, and all the usual kinds of things.

SMITH: You were still there when the riots happened?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, yes. We just left this last August. So it was that, and other factors. I have so much work that I want to do. We've always talked about what we were going to do when we retired. It was a decision that we made jointly. We've had

this good and long marriage together, forty-four years yesterday, as you know, and in all that time we've moved around a lot: Cambridge, Michigan, Washington, Los Angeles, New York, Los Angeles, Washington, Los Angeles. All those moves were based on my job, and Eleanor was wonderful. I think it was hard on her and it was hard on the children when they were young. We have that house over there on Poppasquash, and I know this area very, very well. I knew Rhode Island long before I met Eleanor. When I was a young man, in my teens, both before I went into the army and after, I was coming up to Providence quite a lot to see people and stay with them, so I always had that familiarity.

During the long years of our marriage I got to know Bristol and other parts of the state rather well, and I knew that Eleanor loved it here. This is her world and she feels so much at home here, and I thought this was an opportunity to move. She was going to leave Crossroads School anyway, which was very hard for her to do because she loved it, and she's an absolutely superb teacher. But having decided to go, there was no question in my mind that this time it was going to be not for my job and not just my decision as it had always been in the past, but it was going to be something that would please Eleanor, and I think I made the right decision. Her fall, the accident, has put a crimp in her style to be sure, and it held us both back a little bit, but she's learning to manage, as you can see, and there are worse things that could have happened, so we're grateful that they didn't.

I have found, overnight, more to do than I should have, and I'm accepted in any number of circles here. So all of these things were going on in my mind at the time of retirement. Salvatore in particular, and Lynn, Tommy, and Harold offered me all sorts of inducements to stay on at the Getty, and I accepted this consultantship, but under quite limited conditions, so that I wouldn't have to be out there every other month. I'll go twice, once in January, and once in May. I agreed to make one long trip to Europe at some point, to take care of a lot of unfinished business that I left and see if a couple of very big and important collections that I have been working on for quite a long time can be tied down.

So this unhappy and difficult relationship with Mr. Anderle wasn't a deciding factor, but it was a contributing one. The corporate mentality that filtered down from the ninth floor Trust offices, not only to the Getty Center but to many of the other entities of the Getty Trust, became more and more the way that things were operating. The long interregnum between Kurt's leaving and Salvatore Settis's arrival was very unfortunate I think for the development of the Center. It's not that the people in charge are malicious or evil or anything like that, but it's [inevitable] in any organization that if there's a vacuum it's going to be filled, and it's filled by administrative rules and regulations so that some order can be maintained, particularly when the reason for that order is not entirely the functioning of the institution but is also the satisfaction of the super-agency overlooking things. There is the need to

prove that things are done efficiently and on time and under budget or on budget, and all of those things, which I think is a motivation for activity that is sometimes carried to excess. So, it was a big decision that wasn't made lightly; it was just an album of all of this stuff.

SMITH: I'd like to shift gears more towards the nitty gritty of collection development. I suppose that may involve going back to bureaucratic issues, but as we move into that I'd like to consider something you brought up at lunch. You were mentioning that if you just relied on the dealers you wouldn't have gotten many of the collections that you did get. We've done quite a large number of interviews for this project now, and almost everybody I've interviewed has talked about you coming and looking at their papers and their libraries. Some have been acquired, others have been declined, others you were quite selective in what you took. I wonder, what is this evaluative process that allows you to go quickly through what often may be a rather large collection where you can't look at every folder and certainly can't look at every title on the shelf to determine what are the really great collections, what are the merely good collections, and what are the mediocre collections that you're just going to turn away from?

EDELSTEIN: Well I could try to give you an easy answer and say it's a process very similar to the "nose" that I was talking about. In many of these cases we're talking about an archive or a collection of an artist, a writer, or a scholar whose work I knew,

so I didn't have to spend time evaluating in great detail or specificity the material. I knew what it was like, I knew what would be there. Dick Higgins is a perfect example. I've known him for many years. I knew his poetry, his performance art, his role in the Fluxus movement, his role as a publisher of the Something Else Press. I visited him at his place in New York, and I met him innumerable times in Washington and in Europe. I settled that acquisition with him over the telephone. I didn't go back to look at it. There's no question there's probably some dross in there. If somebody came in here and emptied this room they'd find a laundry claim ticket here somewhere and other pieces of junk.

One of the archives I hope to acquire—it's one of the reasons to go back to Europe again— is that of Max Bill. If we're lucky enough to get even a part of it, it will be one of the most stupendous things ever acquired. Max Bill is a famous artist, very influential, an important figure, but, as you know, I am not an art historian. So I tread a little differently with something like this. I knew something about his history, I knew he was very old, so I went to Hans Luthic, who was in the first class of Getty scholars. He was from Zürich, an old friend of Kurt Forster's, and I think he retires as director of the Swiss Art Institute this coming June. He's an art historian himself, a pillar of the social establishment in Zürich, and an important figure in the art-historical world in his own right. I saw him in Zürich and I asked him if he thought it would be possible to meet Max Bill and convince him that the Getty Center would be a good

home for his archive. I wondered if it could legitimately be exported from Switzerland. Hans answered all my questions in the positive and arranged a meeting with Max Bill. We hit it off, and I visited him five or six times. This has been going on for some years.

Max Bill is well into his eighties, but you'd never know it. He looks like a man of sixty and he acts like a man of fifty; he just seems to be able to go on forever. Some of which I'm sure can be attributed to the fact that he married a very young wife. I think at the age of eighty something he married Angela, who's absolutely lovely and very talented and very good for him and the art world in general. She's an American girl, but she's lived in Switzerland a long time, so that she looks and sounds Swiss. I think she was in her early thirties when she married this eighty-year-old man, and, in the King David tradition, she rejuvenated him. [laughter] They're both delightful people, and they've received me in their house warmly and hospitably each time, but Max always comes up with an excuse for why he can't part with his papers—he's not ready, and so on and so on. Well, sooner or later he will be ready, and then the question will be, how, and to what extent, because it's incredibly valuable, and will the Trust bring forward the money for this? It would have to be an extra appropriation.

I wasn't successful with the Otto Schäfer, and I wasn't successful with a number of other things in recent history, and it's not like the old days—those "old

days" being all of nine or ten years ago now—but in any case, one never gives up hope; that you can never do. I tell this story in contrast to the Dick Higgins situation. I have spent hours going through the Max Bill papers, because, although I know the outline I don't have that same feeling for this kind of stuff. I've spent hours goings through the DDR material with Jürgen. My German is good, but I'm not a native, and I needed to have some things explained to me.

Then there was the Claude Fredericks material. We have two archives on him: the Banyan Press and his personal archive. I didn't have to look at that stuff. I own all of the Banyan Press books. That press was very small; it didn't last all that long—from the war years until about 1970 maybe, something like that. It was this marvelous combination of text and image put together in a way that is absolutely peculiar to that time in American cultural life. It's the sort of thing that the Getty is interested in, and should be interested in, so I thought it was absolutely perfect. Claude Fredericks taught at Bennington College for many years— Japanese theater, classical Greek literature and theater, modern poetry, and courses in graphics. Just the kind of combination that the Getty is interested in. I didn't have to look at that. Again, I did it over the telephone. Of course I'd been in Claude Fredericks's house up in Vermont any number of times, I knew his work, and so on.

The situation was similar with David W. Godine and the archive of the Godine Press. This was a very unusual publishing house for art and literature. I knew what

Godine's books were like, but you have to be careful with publishers' archives. There can be an awful lot of purely business stuff that will just be overwhelming; it wouldn't be worth the other material that's in there. So, I went up to New Hampshire, because he had the things stored up in a warehouse somewhere near Hanover. At first he was going to give it to his alma mater, Dartmouth, but then his publishing house suffered some reverses and he needed money, so he decided to sell the archive, and he contacted me. This is the way the so-called network works. He said, "I need money. I don't want to sell the archive, I already promised it to Dartmouth, but it wasn't a sealed, contractual promise or anything like that. I told them that maybe, someday, I'd give it to them."

We're very careful not to step on other institutions' toes. If it had been even a verbal promise I would have turned away immediately. That's something that I have tried very hard to instill in the collection development people at the Getty. You have to be purer than Caesar's wife in this respect, especially at the Getty, which suffers so much bad publicity about its acquisitions, more in the museum than elsewhere, but still. So, even though I knew what the Godine books were like, I went to Hanover and spent a day going through box after box after box of this stuff to make sure that there was a good balance and variety of papers: invoices and statements that some economic historian might be interested in someday, but also editorial stuff and layout and design material. Well, I think that answers your question.

SMITH: One of your main achievements was building up a rich collection of Dada, and neo-Dada materials, including the Fluxus objects.

EDELSTEIN: The Fluxus I can't take credit for; that was done just as I arrived, and that's to the credit of Anne-Mieke Halbrook and Elmar Seibel. Elmar Seibel was the very well know friend of Jean Brown's. He knew her through many sources, but one of the chief ways that he knew her was because he is a great friend and a contemporary actually, of her two sons: Jonathan Brown, a professor of art history at Princeton, who wrote a fantastic book on Velázquez, and others too; and his brother Robert, a print dealer. Robert and his girlfriend have given it up, I understand. They turned their big print collection over to Elmar to sell, which I think he's doing, little by little, to a buyer in Japan. So, you see, this is what a good dealer who feels that he is welcome in an institution will do. He came to Anne-Mieke and said, "Look, here's an opportunity to be the repository of one of the most important Fluxus collections there is." There are three great Fluxus collections: the [Gilbert and Lila] Silverman one in Michigan; the one in Stuttgart, the name of which escapes me for the moment; and then Jean Brown's.

SMITH: The Hans Sohm collection is in Stuttgart.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, exactly, with that wonderful photograph on the catalog of all those sausages. I love that. I just happened to be in Stuttgart when there was an exhibit of some of the collection. It was quite remarkable. Fluxus is not universally

acclaimed, you know, and I think with good reason. It's an offshoot of Dada, really. I don't think it was the most important artistic movement of the twentieth century by any means, but there are some people who do think so. Jon Hendricks thinks it, he lives, breathes, and eats Fluxus. Alison Knowles is another one, and there are many, many others. So it was a significant movement, and knowing that you can make an authoritative statement about a significant movement is a very important thing. So Elmar presented the collection, the price was right, the money was available, and to her credit, Anne-Mieke recommended it, and to his credit Kurt agreed and it was bought.

So I can't take any credit for that, but I'm perfectly willing to take credit for the Dada, surrealist, futurist, and Russian constructivist material, and collections from other twentieth-century artistic, philosophical, and historical movements. These are things which I am enormously interested in. They provided the cultural underpinnings for the time that we live in. I think that Dada, futurism, and surrealism, are going to be of lasting interest, much more so than Fluxus. I felt that it was very important that the Getty Center build on the beginnings. There's a lot of Dada and surrealism in Jean Brown's collection, not just Fluxus. There's not so much Italian futurism; that I made my own thing.

SMITH: How did the [F. T.] Marinetti collection open up?

EDELSTEIN: Well, I looked around, and I noticed that there were two areas that I

thought needed beefing up. One was Italian futurism, and the other was every other kind of futurism. And Dada too; we had very little of the Zürich Dada movement, for example. We had the beginnings of a Russian constructivist collection, but nobody was doing adding to it. There was an odd futurist piece or so, and I was always interested in futurism myself; I mean, it's Italian. I was always curious about the relationship of futurism to fascism. I bought many, many things through her good services of a friend when I was at the National Gallery of Art. Carla Martzoli is a wonderful old lady now. I don't think she can walk, she suffers from terrible arthritis. She was quite a student of cartography as a younger woman, but then she lost money, and during the war her place in Milan was bombed out. She lost her house, and a lot of possessions, and she had a husband who absconded with a lot of her money. She was a woman of elegance, and she came from a very good family. It was her father who was the engineer who built that fantastic railway station in Milan. She came to America, and I met her through Jake Zeitlin.

SMITH: So, it was many years ago?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, many years ago. I said to her, "Carla, you travel in all these circles, you must know a lot of households that are breaking up, or collections. Could you keep your eye out for things?" Well, to make a long story short, when I got to the Getty, I told her that I was interested in getting futurist stuff, and she said, there was a family in Padua, related to Umberto Boccioni, an artist that I've always

liked very much, particularly his sculpture. He's very much like Brancusi. Carla said they had a lot of stuff. She paved the way, and I went several times to Padua, to this awful family, who still believed that cousin Umberto was in the other room. It was just weird. But now the Getty Center has this archive of Boccioni's, which is ravishing: his notebooks, his sketchbooks, his letters to his sister and to his mother. We had an exhibition of his archive at the Center.

I knew of Lucia Marinetti through my Yale connections, which are now dying off. She sold part of part of the Marinetti collection to Yale, but I had heard that there was an argument of some kind and she was no longer pleased with Yale. So, I went to my friend Elaine Cohen in New York, who is another one of my favorite dealers that I didn't mention in that list before, a real professional. She's the proprietor of a shop called Ex Libris—not to be confused with Ars Libri. I had known her husband, Arthur Cohen, very well. He was one of the most brilliant and most unusual men I've ever met in my life—a philosopher, a novelist, a publisher, an epicure, a gourmet. He founded a little publishing house called Meridian Books, and he made a lot of money. He sold it, retired, and said, "Now I'm going to do what I've always wanted to do. I'm going to have my own candystore." And he opened Ex Libris, on East 70th Street between Lexington and Third. It's like going into a museum of books and graphics. Only twentieth-century stuff: Dada, surrealism, futurism, Russian stuff. He was a great linguist, he spoke every language you can

think of. He died, unfortunately, and Elaine, who is an extremely interesting person in her own right, and a very, very good artist, has kept it going.

So I went to her and asked her about Lucia Marinetti. I pointed out that getting stuff out of Italy was always a problem, and our hands had to be absolutely clean. Well, that was the beginning, and we didn't buy the stuff because there was a lot of questioning about it. Everybody got in on the act. After it was long completed, then they woke up. "How did you get this out of Italy? It's against the law" da-da-da, and so on. I said I didn't get it out of Italy, I bought it in New York from Ex Libris. Ex Libris signed a contract with us saying it was legally imported. If it wasn't legally imported they were in trouble, but we did everything by the book.

SMITH: Is this the collection that the Interpol people showed up at the Getty Center about?

EDELSTEIN: It may have been. Or, it could have been something else . . . oh, no. That was the French architect and writer about architecture. Nicholas had bought six sketches by this guy . . . now, what was his name?

SMITH: Well, we'll figure that out.

EDELSTEIN: It'll come back to me. He was very, very well known; you'd know him immediately. Nicholas had bought these sketches from Harry Lunn, somebody else with whom I've had a long association. I knew Harry Lunn when he first opened a photography gallery on P Street in the Georgetown section of Washington, and he

did extremely well. Then he went off to Paris, because he's always been a Francophile, and he divides his time between New York and Paris. I see him from time to time and I like him enormously. I didn't make myself popular at the Getty when I told everybody that not only did I like him, but like most people I like, I thought he was an extremely honest and decent man, and that he would not have knowingly sold the Getty or anybody else anything that was stolen. Well, it turned out that these drawings had been stolen.

SMITH: Was this a twentieth-century French architect?

EDELSTEIN: No, nineteenth century.

SMITH: Like [Eugène Emmanuel] Viollet-Le-Duc?

EDELSTEIN: Viollet-Le-Duc, exactly, exactly. So we said, "Harry, these have been stolen." And everybody jumped on him. The thing is, the French didn't know this. They didn't know these were stolen until long, long after the sale had taken place. Nicholas Olsberg had bought them, but he was long gone. Somehow or another they discovered this and the Interpol came around.

[Tape X, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: We got our money back, or traded. I've forgotten how it was settled. But I thought that everybody was much too quick to say, "This man is a crook." For all I know, he is, but nobody knows this for certain. I trusted my instincts, and I've known Harry Lunn for many years. Life is full of strange twists and turns, to be sure,

but God knows, he didn't have to make this sale. Harry's done extraordinarily well, and I should think this would have been half a peanut in his scheme of things. You know, you always hear, "If you're going to cheat, cheat big."

SMITH: So the Marinetti collection was bought from Ex Libris, and that was that?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, and many other people. There is a Marinetti nephew, Leonardo Clarici, from whom we bought a number of things. We've stopped buying from him because he can't verify the provenance of things and isn't open about where and how he got them. He lives in Paris. And there have been other sources. Carlo Belli was another one. Kurt discovered him. He was a sort of polemicist, writer, who said he was never a fascist, but I didn't believe it. He was a very important figure, a "man of letters," in Europe. One day he'd write an article for the *Terza Pagina*, or the *Corriere Della Sera*, on politics, and the next day he'd review a movie, and the next time he'd be discussing some current literary phenomenon, that sort of thing. He was like Edmund Wilson. Belli was the editor of *Novecento*, a very important magazine.

So Kurt said, "Go to Rome, talk to Carlo Belli and see if he won't part with his papers." That was hard, hard work. I went to Rome and I went to Rome and I went to Rome, and finally I got him to agree. Everything was signed, and sealed, but not delivered, and he changed his mind. He said it had to stay in Rome, he couldn't bear the thought of it leaving, but we could come and microfilm it all. So we did. I had to arrange all of that, and arranging for microfilming in Rome is no picnic.

SMITH: But he didn't get as much money, presumably?

EDELSTEIN: He got some, over my objection. I thought since he was going to get a copy of the microfilm, and he had the original, and we were paying all this money to have the microfilm made, why were we giving him any money? But I was over-ruled on that.

SMITH: I was told that [Giuseppe] Panza [di Biumo] apparently attempted to deliver Xeroxes when his collection was purchased?

EDELSTEIN: No. I'm sure it was purely a misunderstanding on the part of his daughter and daughter-in-law, who packed the things up. The contract was very clear. When the material came it was inspected, because we have a routine for that; it's done immediately and quickly and very efficiently. We have fourteen days, from the moment of delivery to go through everything, and we take this very seriously. We needed fourteen days with the Panza collection because it's enormous. It took me five years to get it. The Getty Center is now the preeminent resource for the study of American art between 1950 and the present, especially for the conceptualists and minimalists, not all of whom I admire.

Incidentally, it's another important fact that people who do the kind of work that I do not only have to guard against a certain proprietary interest in the material, but we have to be careful not to let our taste interfere with the needs of the institution. Now, there's no question that there has to be some sympathetic tension

between the two, but you don't always have to like the material that you acquire, and in the case of this kind of art I'm not all that fond of it. But the Panza material was hard, hard work. I think I should express at this time, and in this forum, that I felt a rather sincere disappointment in the Getty. When the Panza material was being discussed, the visiting committee would come around with Harold Williams and we would always have to "show and tell" and talk about what we were doing. I mentioned the Panza collection in the early years, and I recall Mr. Williams saying, "Well, I know Panza di Biumo, and you'll never get it. He just plays with people., you'll never get it."

We did get it. I won't be modest about this. I got it for the Getty, and it was five years of damn hard work. Not only that, we did not have to pay him the $5,000,000 he insisted on over and over again for at least a year. We got it for a million. It was a bargain. At first Panza resisted, [but he came around]. The misunderstanding about the Xeroxes was immediately taken care of, and Panza was abject in his apologies. I know him and his family so well now. I was in and out of their houses over a period of five years. Panza makes two trips to America every year, and during each of those trips we spend long periods of time together. He wasn't trying to pull any tricks, it was one of those unfortunate things, which was immediately rectified, and everything that was supposed to be there was sent; it's all there, and it's spectacular stuff, absolutely spectacular.

So what did I mean about being disappointed? I wrote a note to Harold and I said, "I hope you like knowing that the Panza collection is here. It's complete, it's wonderful, and this long saga is over." Now I know Williams is a busy man, and he has a lot of big things on his mind. He doesn't have to worry about me and my small operation down there, but we don't spend a million dollars on a collection every day, and this was not just any collection. Williams knew it was ongoing for five years, and I think I should have gotten a telephone call, or a note on a memo pad . . . something, but I never did. And Harold is not the only one. I have never heard a word from anybody. Congratulations aside, nobody even said, "God, you must be happy that's over!" [laughter]

I confess to having felt . . . I suppose "hurt" is not the wrong word. I thought this was pretty callous; it wasn't right. I don't want to belabor the point. I got plenty of pats on the back and commendations in my annual performance reviews; they were glowing. I certainly was never underappreciated when it came to those, either by Kurt, when he wrote them, or Tommy, when he succeeded Kurt in that duty. I have no reason to complain in that respect. But one wants something a little bit more than that. Some of it may have been my own fault, because I always bent over backwards. Unlike this exercise that we're going through, the pronoun "I" never crossed my lips. This is something that I was absolutely scrupulous about. It was always what "we" had done; it was always what "our" collection was. I always spoke in that manner.

Maybe I have myself to blame for it. But we're not talking about babes in the woods, you know, and I feel perhaps wrongly, perhaps childishly, perhaps naively, that sharper administrators and directors, people in power, should have been a little bit more sensitive about this kind of thing, because the returns are enormous when people make a little bit of effort in that direction. The costs are very little. It takes a minute to pick up the phone and say, "Good job," or, "You must be pleased." That cost is infinitesimal compared to the returns that come from it. Well, anyway, be that as it may, I got that off my chest.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you about Collection X?

EDELSTEIN: Ah, Collection X is very simple. It had to be called Collection X because Mario Lanfranchi has a conspiratorial nature; he likes that sort of thing. He's a theater man and he's very theatrical. He's Italian, of course, so it's innate within him. In addition to just being Italian, his father was the director of the great theater in Parma. Mario himself is a producer; he has a very successful play in the Haymarket Theater in London at this moment. He's one of the most unusual men that I've known. I'm very pleased that we've become personal friends. I met him many years ago, when I was at the National Gallery of Art, through this same nice old woman that I mentioned, Carla Martzoli, who was selling a collection of his. Mario Lanfranchi is very rich. In addition to this theatrical background, he has inherited the proprietorship of one of the largest *fattoria*, just outside of Parma, where they make

Parmesan cheese. He doesn't participate in it, he just owns it.

SMITH: A dairy plant, right?

EDELSTEIN: Well, more than a dairy plant. The cows are there, and they never go outside. They never see green grass. Mario pretends he doesn't know anything, says it's run by his uncles and this and that. Carla said to me, "Would you like to meet an interesting man and see his fantastic house and his art? I'm going to Parma, would you like to come with me?" This was long ago, when I was at the National Gallery and she was still active and driving. She was a mad woman—that high—couldn't even see over the windshield. So I said sure, I'd like to come along. We took a number of trips together, Carla and I. We went to Venice and we went to Parma, all kinds of places in the north of Italy; she knew everybody. So Mario met us in Parma and we drove out to his house in the country. He had this wonderful house with Caravaggios, and Carpaccios, and these books—just unbelievable. It was a typical rustic Italian country villa. So we met and exchanged addresses and phone numbers.

We saw each other from time to time, and at one point Mario came to see me at the Getty and said, "You know that I have this fantastic festival book collection. Do you want to buy it?" He had inherited many of his books, but most he bought himself. He gets tired of things, decides to sell, and goes on to something else. I had been drooling over his festival book collection ever since I first saw it, so I said, "Sure." Then of course it took ages to decide. He said, "I don't want anybody to

know, you know. People will give me the evil eye." It's like this project, with the restriction on the tapes. What do I care? And why should anybody care? I don't know why they make such a fuss of it. I made it very clear: "Here are the books. They're magnificent, the price is right, the man simply does not want his name used. Why is it a problem?" To this day I don't know why it's a problem. "Well, we don't like doing things like that." Why are they so provincial about it? It's perfectly normal, and besides which, you've got to understand it's a different kind of culture. Things aren't real to Mario unless he makes a drama out of it.

SMITH: This objection came from your staff, or from the higher ups?

EDELSTEIN: From the staff. I got very impatient with it, I have to tell you. It's one of the few times when I really put my foot down very hard and said, "There's simply not going to be any more discussion about this. This is the way it's going to be, it's in the contract and you as much as anybody else have to follow the contract." So they did, and what's the upshot of all this? The Getty Center will soon have, if it doesn't already, one of the greatest collections in the world of Renaissance festival books.

At some point, when I came to the Getty, Kurt asked me what it was that I wanted to do more than anything else, and I said that one of the things I wanted to do was to create a place for festival books. We had been talking about the relationship of text and image, we had been talking about the multicultural, interdisciplinary aspects of the Center, and how much more so Kurt wanted it to be, a goal that I

swallowed hook, line and sinker, and sincerely believed in and very much continue to believe in. Here was a genre which embodied that. It had everything: texts, history, drama, spectacle, births, deaths, coronations, and entrances into cities. Kurt understood immediately what I was referring to, and he said, "Go ahead." And I did. The Center had a nice little collection to begin with, to be sure. I give them credit; a lot of it was the work of Marcia Reed, I guess, and Jacques Vellekoop, who could be such a pain in the neck, but who was also such a valuable ally and colleague. There were other dealers as well. But I made this a big priority, and I'm really very happy to say that it's a success that I can point to.

SMITH: There's another area that has struck me as being for the Getty Center, surprisingly strong, which is papers of nineteenth-century French painters: Pissarro, Signac, Maximilien Luce. It's not what one would expect.

EDELSTEIN: Well, perhaps not, I don't know. But why not? Another goal was to beef up enormously the nineteenth century as a whole. The nineteenth-century resources and studies had been very much neglected. So we were lucky that we could make inroads in the French nineteenth century and we made some very good inroads in Germany too. When I came to the Getty there was a sort of silent agreement that the Getty was not interested in America and American studies. I wondered what they were talking about. We're a multicultural, interdisciplinary institution. We're interested in the world—the Western world, anyway, for the

moment. Of course we're interested in America.

Maurice Bloch was at UCLA, and when he died we got a large part of his papers and library. I got a lot of flack about that, as a matter of fact, but we purchased it and some of the staff were very good about helping with that and did very hard and very good work. We have a very good staff member, Joanne Paradise, who works in this area, and I gave her a lot of freedom, because she's capable and very good, and so she's found a lot of stuff on her own, and she's done very well. I've pointed out a few things, and others have contributed. I think we've still got a long way to go in nineteenth-century studies—French, German, and we've hardly touched Italy in the nineteenth century. But it's definitely something that we're interested in and want to continue.

SMITH: Now are these things that just come on the market for one reason or another?

EDELSTEIN: Both, it's just like all these other things I've been mentioning; sometimes they've come on the market, sometimes we've sought them out through one connection or another.

SMITH: Okay. Well, maybe we should stop here.

EDELSTEIN: Maybe we should.

SESSION FOUR: 7 JANUARY, 1996

[Tape XI, Side One]

SMITH: I wanted to start with Kurt Forster, one of the key people you were involved with at the Getty. You had mentioned in the previous session that as you came on board you had discussions which were in a sense classes about what he thought about scholarship and books, etc., and I wonder if you could go into the vision that he was trying to impart to you in a little bit more detail.

EDELSTEIN: Absolutely. I would be happy to do that because that's very, very important. I want to make one preliminary remark about it first, because the hiring process was very strange to me, and in some ways I think it played a large role in subsequent events. A lot of people said they played a part in it, but I've never been able to determine to my satisfaction how my name entered the list of candidates. I asked several times, but it was all dismissed with, "Oh, don't worry about that. You're here, you're the best man for the job," all that sort of thing. So that puzzle is still a puzzle. I know I came out twice, and essentially I had three interviews. Did we go over this?

SMITH: Actually, you're going into it in much more detail, so I think you should continue.

EDELSTEIN: Okay. I can't remember what we said and didn't say about certain things. So I actually had three interviews when I came out here. I remember sitting

out there on those uncomfortable, straight leather chairs in the hall for a long, long time. I paced up and down and wandered around, because Kurt was on some international phone call and he was more than a half hour late for my appointment. He apologized of course. We talked about general things, and I went around and met people. From my point of view it was a not very successful interview, because I was totally unprepared for meeting the staff—both individually and in groups—and for the kinds of questions that I got, which were very specific. I was really very unprepared, so I winged it somehow. I remember not feeling very happy about it, but I did the best I could. The staff people were nice, but I was never really sure of what kind of impression I had made on them, and of course that was a very important matter to me.

I don't remember the sequence of events, but I think the second event was a phone call from Harold Williams's office. At that time I was in Washington, still at the National Gallery of Art, and I received a phone call saying that Nancy Englander was going to be in Washington for various reasons, and she would like to have a breakfast meeting with me on such and such a day. I knew the name Nancy Englander, and I knew something of her relationship with Harold Williams, and I knew something about her relationship with the Getty as a whole, but I didn't know much. I had no idea then of the large role Nancy played intellectually and administratively in the formation of the Getty Trust. So I was quite surprised by this

request. Not only surprised, I was wondering if this meeting was really necessary, or if it was just curiosity on her part. Why should I be interviewed by this lady who I quite mistakenly thought had *some* administrative role in the Trust office and helped out somehow? Far from it, of course, as we know. I really couldn't understand, and I'm not sure I took it as seriously as I should have. In any case, I showed up at the Four Seasons Hotel, and I asked for her, and I was amused when the guy at the desk said, "Yes, she's expecting you, and she apologizes, but she's exercising. She'll be down a bit late, and if you want to sit down and start breakfast, go right ahead." I waited.

She came down and apologized for being a little late. She said that the Four Seasons was one of the few hotels where you could request exercise equipment to be brought to your room, and she liked to keep in shape. So we sat down and had breakfast. It was a long meeting, and she asked me about my history at the Library of Congress, but mostly she was interested in the National Gallery. What had I done there, what kind of budget had I worked with, how it was spent, what I did about donors, how I administered this, how I managed that, the kind of staff I had hired. We talked very little, as I recall, if at all, about any particular job I was being considered for. It was all about me, about my professional past.

SMITH: But by this time you had an idea of what the position would be, didn't you?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, of course, I certainly did, although it was vague, and that's

another matter which I'll come to in a second. But we didn't talk about the Getty, we didn't talk about its programs, its mission, its personalities, none of that. Nancy didn't explain why she was involved. My assumption was that Harold Williams and the others wanted another opinion, and it was convenient because she was going to be in Washington for various meetings and things.

During my first interview out here I talked very little to Kurt. He told me that he'd heard all these great things about me, he knew all about me, and I was going to do great things at the Getty, but nothing was spelled out. It was not a very long meeting, as I recall, and then he took me to lunch at the Rose Café, which was much nicer in those days than it is now. So that was interview one, and then there was interview two with Nancy, and I came out again for a third interview with Kurt. Actually, there were three lunches. Herb Hymans, Tom Reese, and a woman who was an administrator at the Center were at the second lunch. Her last name was Cooper. She came from UCLA and has now gone back to UCLA. I can't think of her first name. I have a great respect for her, I thought she was a very bright woman. In any case, that's neither here nor there. All these lunches become confused in my mind, but I remember then there was a lunch at Chinois, and that may have been when I first arrived as a sort of welcome, and a lot of people were invited to that. Marcia Reed was there, and Anne-Mieke Halbrook, and Nicholas Olsberg, who was still there at that time.

But back to the time when Kurt and I lunched alone, we talked, and again I deemphasize the "we" because a discussion with Kurt Forster was always and I think still is, very much a one-sided affair. Kurt of course is a brilliant man. He's really a polymath, and he has a very high opinion of his opinions, a great deal of which is justified, but he doesn't listen very well. Or, no, I should amend that: if he thinks that the intellectual argument is going to be advanced or decreased, or in some way affected, then he listens very well, in the same way that he will read a thesis. So it isn't that he doesn't hear, but he hears selectively. If in conversation you agree with what he says, he hears it and makes a strong mental note of it. If he detects that you disagree, and your disagreement is based on sound principles and sound argument, he makes note of it and does something with it. If it requires a change of opinion on his part, it happens; he's not a tyrant. He has very strong opinions and thinks strongly of them, but he's a true intellectual.

Most of our conversation was spent in Kurt's telling me what the Center was all about: what its mission was, what his mission was, what he liked and disliked in terms of the rapport that existed with his colleagues. He spent an embarrassingly long time detailing the faults of the then existing staff, some of which were major, many of which were minor, but they played a big role in his picture of the institution. Sometimes they aided his administration of the Getty Center, but very often they did not. So, we went through this for an hour, or two hours, whatever it was, while

sitting in that office of his at the end of this hall. I was sitting on that very uncomfortable banquette that is still in there, that very hard seat with a straight back. Coffee, or water would be brought in, as it always was—all those little amenities were always very much observed. Then, at some point, I think it was probably after lunch, I forced the issue regarding a number of very specific questions: my salary, moving expenses, benefits, insurance, health—all of those things that everybody is interested in, and has to be. Kurt was not interested in discussing any of these things. He turned me over to Cooper, the administrator, who could easily answer all the questions but one. She explained about insurance, and all the other benefits, and how one was paid, and what the deductions were. Then I was told that I had an appointment with Harold Williams, and it was only then that I would learn what my salary would be; it was Harold Williams who was hiring me, with Kurt's strong, enthusiastic recommendation.

Harold showed up. I remember it very well, because we sat exactly as we're sitting right now, Richard, you and I, except that it was reversed; I was sitting where you are, and Harold was sitting where I am. I was looking out the window and the light was afternoon light—all very attractive. Harold asked me about what I had heard, and was I interested in coming. We talked about people we knew in common, and the experiences that we had had in common. He asked me what I thought of the staff, what I thought of the collections, what kinds of things I thought I might do, and

how I'd go about it.

Finally we got down to the issue of what I was going to be paid. Well, what I was going to be paid was apparently a problem. It was a problem because at that point in my career I had reached a high level in civil service at the National Gallery. I'd had a long time in the government, in one form or another, and it all adds up. In the government it doesn't make any difference what you do; it's length of service and all that kind of stuff. I'd been in the army, I'd been many years at the Library of Congress, and then many years at the National Gallery of Art, so I had reached a rather high level and I was drawing what was then a good salary. So I told Harold I couldn't possibly come, even though the benefits were very good, my moving expenses would be paid, and if I bought a house I'd be eligible for a Getty Trust mortgage, which was given, I guess, to the VIP class. I don't know if they do that anymore. The mortgage rate was very low, and you paid a very low percentage of interest; it was deducted from your salary, so it was painless.

All those things were very good, but I was worried about the salary I would get, and I was worried about my pension, because I was already over the age at which the Getty would start a pension program, you see. That was 1986, so I was sixty-two. At sixty, that's it, you can't start a new pension program. This was obviously a problem for the Trust also, not just for Harold. They couldn't pay me very much more than I was already getting at the National Gallery of Art because only Kurt

Forster would be making more money than I. Harold said that his problem was one of comparability. I said, "Well you know, California's an expensive place. I was hoping that you were going to lure me here with a big salary." He said that from his point of view it was a big salary, because I was going to be the second highest paid person at the Getty Center. So I said I'd think about it.

SMITH: But he was offering you more money than you were making at the National Gallery?

EDELSTEIN: A very small amount. I thought it was a little strange, and I don't think that that situation, if true, lasted very long, because I can't imagine that Tom Reese's salary would have been less than mine. I know that this is all out of the window now, that this business of comparability is a dead issue. The question of salaries for the top levels has always been a very well-kept secret around here. I have no idea what various people get. I know what Salvatore Settis makes, but that's only because of one of those crazy, and in a way horrible, accidents. I sat down at this very table, and there had obviously been a meeting. Somebody had left a piece of on the table. I'm not a saint, there it was, so I read it. [laughter] Settis's salary was there, and various other things about travel and a car. I don't mean to imply that anything was wrong, or even excessive; it was just there and it was totally accidental. All this took place in a matter of seconds, of course, so I didn't know what to do with it, but over in the corner there were piles of papers and books, so I just took the

paper, turned it over, and put it underneath the pile. If I had destroyed it it could have been something that somebody was looking for, so I just stuck it over there on the counter underneath a pile of files. I figured if somebody lost it they'd look everywhere and they'd find it. So I went back home to Washington and my wife and I discussed the job.

SMITH: Did your wife want to make the move?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes. The idea of coming back to California was very welcome to her. She loved Washington, we had a very good life there, but the idea of coming back to California, and particularly coming back to Crossroads School, where she knew she would have an influential place, was very, very attractive and welcoming, so she was pleased.

In many ways, my first reaction was to say no. I thought that I deserved a lot more money, and that if they wanted me they should pay it, and I didn't think that this business of comparability was a very important one. From a bureaucrat's point of view I can understand it, but I never appreciated the importance of this kind of measurement. There's no question about it, I was disappointed.

SMITH: Did that indicate to you that there was some question within the Getty structure as to whether perhaps your position was desirable?

EDELSTEIN: It didn't then. It certainly has occurred to me since. Especially since I went back to talk to Kurt about it, because I thought it was strange that he had no

part in this discussion. I thought it was even stranger when I went back to talk to him about it that he still didn't want any part of the discussion. He didn't take part in any decisions about money. I'm not sure that that's true now. At that time I believed it, now I'm not so sure. I think that he should have made it his business to get involved in that area, because there was no question that he wanted me. I don't know about the rest of the institution. But he wouldn't discuss it. He wouldn't confirm to me the truth or falsehood of the assertion that that salary was second only to his, which I thought was very strange. He said he didn't know, that this was all up to Harold Williams. He said he certainly hoped I would come, he needed me, he wanted me, and this and that.

So a combination of things contributed to my decision to accept the offer. One, I was ready to leave the National Gallery. I'd had a good career there, we'd had a good life in Washington, but I thought I really did what I had been hired to do. I created a good library out of nothing. It would be a great library if my work had been continued, but it's a good library. Eleanor's wishes about wanting to come back were very influential in this whole matter. Another very important factor was, we got a fantastically good price for our house in Washington. A fourth factor was Harold's seemingly very generous proposal about the pension rule. He said he would make a special arrangement and put trust money into an account, and that would be part of my pension fund, and money would be added to it. There was a legal document

about this.

SMITH: So, basically, it was a private retirement account?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, whatever it was called, I can't remember, but it worked out. They changed the rules later, anyway. I don't know whether they were forced to by some legal requirement, or they just did it. In any case, I remember just out of the blue one time being told that they had changed the rules, and now I was going to be part of the regular pension program, and this arrangement that I had made with Harold Williams would simply be merged into it. So when I retired from here last year I got a very good pension, not so much for the length of service, because I was only here from '86 to '94, but because I had a very good salary by the time I left here, what with the increases and one thing and another.

SMITH: Once you got here, were salary increases pro forma, or did this issue of comparability keep recurring?

EDELSTEIN: It never was mentioned again, but the salary increases are not pro forma, they're based on performance. At the beginning of the year the administrator and the Trust people get together and they decide that the salary increases will be anywhere from zero to five percent or whatever percent it may be, depending on the budgets for that year. I was always in the highest percentile, or at least in the middle, as I can remember. Also, there are those performance ratings: excellent, good, not good, and a fourth one, which is called the "walking on water" category, which is

given very rarely. I think I got that twice; I know I got it once, so that meant a very high salary increase that year. So I never brought up the salary question again. Now, hindsight tells me that I should have, initially. I think I should have said, "If you can't pay me anymore than I'm already getting, then I'm not coming. I'm already in a good job, I'm a civil servant and unless I really screw up royally or do something terrible, they can't fire me, I've got a nice house, I've got this and I've got that." But I didn't. We wanted to come back to California, even though I wasn't going to make as much money as I wanted to be making right then and there.

[Tape XI, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: I had very little interaction with Harold Williams after I started working here. From time to time there would be some interaction, but it was very sporadic. For a long time there were a lot of show and tell operations; the trustees would want to see what was going on at the Center. We'd put up an exhibition, or we'd schedule a series of little talks or a slide show. Of course I always had a large part in those. There would be questions and answers concerning acquisitions, among other things, so I always had to have a lot to say. During Franklin Murphy's time of course I always knew that I had a friend in high court. We had known each other for many, many years, at UCLA and at the National Gallery, and we liked and respected one another. I would very often orient things towards his interests, which wasn't very hard to do because he was such an unusual man with so many interests—deep as well

as broad. He could always be counted on if we needed some help, whether it was financial or moral or supportive. I knew that I could always go to Franklin, and he would do his best. He was wonderful. He's very much missed.

My relationship with Harold Williams was a little more distant, cooler. I wasn't always sure of what was behind his questions. Was it an attempt just simply to elicit information for himself? Was it an attempt to further an explanation for the benefit of the trustees or the visitors? Was it an attempt to get me and the others to refine our points of view about what we were doing to make them fit more within the trust's guidelines, as vague as they were? I never really knew. I had one encounter with Harold which I found disturbing; it didn't seem natural or normal. Quite frankly, I've forgiven him for it, because I think it was an abnormal thing. I made an acquisition once of which I was very, very proud; this was the *Transsibérien*, by Sonia Delaunay and Blaise Cendrars, which we mentioned before. It's a very famous work of art, and a document about the work of art, which I bought at auction. I use the pronoun "I" deliberately because it has a lot to do with the way I think things should be done in terms of collection development and acquisitions. So it's not an ego trip, but it is deliberate. Thanks to the encouragement and the interest of Kurt Forster, who gave me free rein, and the rest of the staff, the Getty Center's holdings in terms of the Western avant-garde are really among the best in the world, but at that time we didn't have a copy of the *Transsibérien.* It's rare, there had not been a copy

for public sale for a long time, and it came up. Like a lot of things, there's a dearth of them, then one comes on the market and sells for a lot of money, and automatically—this happens over and over again—aha! all the ones that have been hidden and unknown for years all of a sudden show up. People see that a copy of *Transsibérien* has sold for $100,000, and they say, "We've got one that grandma put away in the drawer all these years. Now's the time to get rid of it!"

I've seen it for sale three or four times since I bought this copy for the Getty. There were supposed to be a hundred copies in existence, but some were destroyed, and I don't know of any census taken to determine how many survived. Of course it's a very important work, and it's very beautiful. It's a keystone document for the history of twentieth-century art and literature. So I bought it, and the price was somewhere near $100,000, and it was considered a great coup. Kurt Forster was ecstatic, and a lot of people thought it was wonderful. I felt great about it. We exhibited it here at the end of the corridor, in this case that a man could stand in. The installation people are very good here. Don Williamson, the photographer, was helping with installations then, as he still is now, I believe. Anyway, we unfolded this piece, which folded up is no bigger than this little notebook. This copy was quite special; it had decorated leather bindings, painted by Sonia Delaunay. It was a gift from her to a Russian artist, whose name escapes me. So it was not only a very good copy, in excellent condition, but it had these special associations. So it was unfurled,

and it hung there in the case, and there was a reception in the hall, the usual food and drink, and people milling around, looking at this piece.

The party up here was beginning to break up and we were going off for our acquisition talks, and Harold stopped me in front of the case. "So," he said, "Is this the thing that you just bought at auction for $100,000?" I said, "Yes, isn't it wonderful?" He said, "Who is ever going to use it?" I said I didn't know specifically, but the same question could be asked of everything that we had here. I said we'll have it for the future, we'll have it for infinity, it will be used, and it will be known that we have it. His reaction was very cool and indifferent, and he shrugged and said, "It seems like a lot of money." I said, "You know, Harold, it's like everything else. 'A lot of money' is a relative thing. Things are worth to you what you pay for them. It hadn't been sold for a long time, and that's what it took. I think it's a great acquisition." He said, "Well, maybe you can explain that to these people."
I was very, very unhappy after that evening. I mentioned it to Kurt, and he said not to take it so hard.

Around that time, I can't remember if it was before this incident or after, Harold wrote a memo to Kurt about having to cut back, and this was very early on in our acquisitions of this sort of thing. Kurt asked me to reply, and I did. I wrote a long memorandum talking about the kinds of materials that we bought and that we hoped to buy, why they were important, and what they represented in the world of

art, letters, and culture. I have to say this was one of the few low points of my stay here, because I got a note back, addressed to me, with a copy to Kurt, that Harold resented being patronized. He read my memo and felt that my words and perhaps my tone were patronizing. Kurt's reaction was that I should be more careful, to which I said to him, "Yes, perhaps you're right, I should be more careful. One doesn't ever want to be patronizing to anybody, whether they deserve it or not, but in that case, why don't you write these memos?" He never did, and never would. Similar situations came up later, and he would never take that responsibility. There were many times when I had to explain why we wanted to buy something. I always have great difficulty with that, explaining why something cost so much. Sometimes I knew what it meant; if it was a dealer, sometimes I knew what he paid for it. Most of the time one doesn't know. It's an age old problem: what is something worth? It's worth what you will pay for it.

SMITH: Was there a more general concern about the Getty driving up the prices and creating an artificial market, or being victimized because the wealth of the Trust was so well known?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, yes of course, that came up all the time. And it's a perfectly legitimate question. Everybody took it for granted from day one that the [J. Paul] Getty Museum was made up of nothing but altruistic people who did nothing but dream about how they could have no effect on the market. That was always an

accepted myth about the Museum. Why it was taken for granted that because the Getty Center from the time that it started would not have the same altruistic point of view, or would not recognize that it was in its own best interests—since it intended to go on for a long time—to treat the market carefully, I don't know. So I had to answer this question a lot.

I never felt, and I don't to this day feel that we didn't get value for our money at the time of purchase. I'm not talking about the value that accrues later, and this is true in every institution that collects for the future, for scholarship. There was only one occasion when I felt we paid too much, and then it was a case where I had no control. When we bought the papers of Aldo Rossi we paid too much, and it did have an effect on the market. People knew immediately. We paid over $400,000 for the archive of Aldo Rossi. I negotiated with him for a long time, but at that time Kurt Forster thought—and he may still think—that Aldo Rossi was God's answer to twentieth-century architecture, that he was one of the greatest, and he may very well be.

SMITH: So in that case it was the director making policies?

EDELSTEIN: He made the decision, yes. He said this was what he wanted, and this was what he was going to get because we had to have it. It is a great archive, no question about it. I think the plan is still to publish some of the notebooks. There are fantastic things in it. I made several trips to Milan to look at it. But I thought it was

too much for two reasons. One, we hadn't paid that much for similar archives of architects, and two, it was going to affect what we'd have to pay in the future. Yes, one has this grand and altruistic point of view about how one is going to affect the market for one's colleagues all over the world, but the truth is, it's really a tactic that you have to keep in mind for activities much closer to home. If you're going to over-pay today for the kind of material which you may buy again, you're going to have a hard time tomorrow when something similar comes up, like the Robert Graves archives, or the Mies van der Rohe archives. In fact, for a long period we did have to explain why we paid so much for that archive and we wouldn't pay x y or z for something else. So that was the one time I was overruled.

SMITH: To what degree do you think that from the Trust side there was an implication that because you were book people you were naive, and not used to the large sums of money that were at your disposal?

EDELSTEIN: I don't know, Richard.

SMITH: You didn't get that impression?

EDELSTEIN: No, I didn't get that impression.

SMITH: Did you get any sense that perhaps Williams had an ambivalent attitude about Kurt Forster?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, oh yes. There's no question in my mind about that. I'm not sure that Kurt Forster, as brilliant and as articulate as he could be, and in so many

languages at that, ever satisfactorily communicated his values and his mission beyond a rather narrow band of people. It's too bad, because I think his values are great. They are primarily humanistic values, and they're the ones that I believe in. They are the values that I wanted the collections of the Getty Center to reflect. Whether you're a contemporary artist, a writer, a librarian, an archivist, a curator, or a bibliographer, whatever it may be, the important thing always to remember and to keep very much in the forefront of your mind is that bridge between what came before and what is now or will be. You know, every culture has had poets who write what is known as free verse. Well, there's free verse and there's free verse: there's free verse which reflects a deliberate attempt to change a traditional, classical system to show that there are other ways of expressing ideas or emotions; and then there's free verse which pays no regard whatsoever to anything that has come before it. Sometimes, the second category of free verse, by accident, turns into a work of art, but I think it's very rare, and it's the former kind of creative artistic effort that I think has real meaning for civilization. I am not a Luddite, I don't believe that anything that's new is bad, and I'm not interested in smashing up technology, but I know that a contemporary poet, for example, who knows what a sonnet or a sestina is, will write a better poem today the form of which has no name. I'm not asking that the contemporary poet write sonnets or sestinas or haikus or whatever. I'm asking that his knowledge and his acquaintance with what came before be part of the thought process that went into his creation.

To get back to Kurt Forster, this is what I found attractive about him. This is what I found attractive about the job that I was here to do. Kurt was a man whose interests spanned everything from A to Z. He covered the waterfront, from the most ancient times to the most contemporary times. He was not only a historian of art, not only an architectural historian, but he was a musicologist, a mathematician, a logician, and a chef. I had a feeling that he was interested in creating at the Center the highest form of humanistic scholarship and atmosphere. I felt this in terms of everything that he did, including his selection of scholars. There were always exceptions, an old buddy, an old debt to pay off; I mean, these things happen everywhere. And along with everything else, Kurt was a practical man, practical in every sense of the word. He'd approach someone who was director of a nothing institution because of some political need. He could fix things; you know, he appreciated a good piece of workmanship. I will never forget his remark about Jacob, who still works here. I don't know what his job is now, but Jacob started off as the guy who changed the light bulbs. But Kurt once said about Jacob, "And here's Jacob, who can put up a bookshelf where there's no wall." Because he did, Jacob built a fantastic thing for Kurt once. Kurt had this way with words, you know, and I thought this was so poetic, and beautiful and true, you see. I found myself capable of forgiving him many, many faults.

Kurt was easily bored and he wouldn't listen if he got the message before you

said it. He didn't disguise the fact that he didn't want to have to waste his time hearing it. He was overly critical about small foibles on the part of members of the staff. At one time, one of these information networks on their computer printout couldn't print an umlaut. If you know German, you know that a word without an umlaut and the same word with the umlaut over the particular vowel are very different. They are not the same thing. The printout said, "At this moment our technology would not allow us to print the umlaut, so you'll have to put them in by hand." Well, Kurt could get so irritated by this. His face would get so red, he didn't want to hear about it.

I could forgive him all of that, and I could forgive him also a lack of a human touch. I'm married, I have two sons, and I have four grandchildren. Of course Kurt knew I was married and he met Eleanor on a number of occasions. I don't know that he thought very highly of Eleanor because, although Eleanor has a very respectable Ph.D. and wrote a brilliant dissertation, she's not a scholar. She came to a retreat once, and there was a big table, and everybody around the table was asked to say what they were doing and what their plans were, and it was always what research they were involved in, what they had just published or were just about to publish—all pretty high-level academic stuff. We get to Eleanor, and I can't remember her exact words, but she said something like, "I just want you to know that there is life after scholarship," and she talked about these kids that she'd been teaching, some of whom

couldn't spell, or something like that. [laughter] But she used this phrase, "life after scholarship," and I don't think Kurt was interested, you see. Eleanor can also be very, very witty. She's very quick. I think Kurt, who is also very witty and very quick, doesn't like competition. But to go back to what I started saying about Kurt's lack of a human touch, I'm not sure that he ever knew I had two sons and some grandchildren. I don't recall a time that he ever asked me about them.

SMITH: So uninterested? Do you think this was generalized, that he just didn't care about this aspect of people's lives?

EDELSTEIN: I think so, yes. It's not easy working with somebody like that. I forgave him for that. There were times when it disturbed me a little bit, especially if I could have used a sympathetic ear, either for good or bad, you know, if I was either proud about something or I was sad about something. But it never came up. He never asked. He probably did know [about my family], but it never occurred to him to say, "You've been here five years, and I don't think I've ever heard you talk about your children."

SMITH: Well, did he ever talk about anything outside the life of the mind?

EDELSTEIN: No, he never talked about anything outside the life of the mind. Except if it had to do with how to solve a practical problem, like how to grow a certain plant, but that was an aspect of the life of the mind, because it concerned knowledge; it had to do with skill or craftsmanship or something like that, you see.

This is a very long answer to your original question.

SMITH: I know that Harold Williams, when he came into the Getty, had tutorials about the art which he was not absolutely ignorant about, but nonetheless not up to speed on. Did he have any kind of tutorials vis-à-vis book collecting or libraries?

EDELSTEIN: I'm glad you asked that question, because I started to tell you about Harold Williams. We were talking about my lack of contact with him, but things changed in that regard. In my last year or two, and since, Harold and I have had a much more respectable and respectful, in the almost literal sense of the word, kind of relationship. We have talked more openly.

[Tape XII, Side One]

EDELSTEIN: When I'm here Harold asks me to come up and talk with him. So things have changed in that respect. But as far as tutorials are concerned, I didn't know until now when you told me, that he had these tutorials about art. I think it would have been wonderful if we could have had them with respect to books and manuscripts and that sort of thing. The only thing we had of a similar nature were these show and tell kinds of things that we did for the trustees who were visiting.

SMITH: But these were more one-on-one personal kinds of things.

EDELSTEIN: I wish we had had them, but it was never requested or suggested. After having been accused of being patronizing, I don't know how I would have brought it up myself, but that sort of thing can be quite valuable. I'm sorry it didn't

happen.

SMITH: Presumably Harold and Kurt had long discussions about scholarship and the humanities?

EDELSTEIN: Presumably.

SMITH: But you don't know?

EDELSTEIN: I don't know. I know that Kurt hated the directors' meetings, he said so. He often didn't go. After Tom Reese was here for a while and it became obvious that Tom was interested in that kind of exchange, Tom went a lot. I don't whether this is true or not now, but apparently at that time all the directors were to write a monthly report.

SMITH: That's what they did, yes.

EDELSTEIN: But Kurt never wrote any. How he got away with it, I don't know. Why it wasn't demanded of him when it was demanded of the other directors, I don't know either. I know he didn't do it, because the reports of the directors were circulated to the senior staff, and we'd get them and read them, or skim through them, in my case, because I found them very dull and uninteresting. They were never about ideas, and it was all just administrative, routine stuff for the most part. I don't think there's any question that Kurt felt he was superior to this sort of thing. When Luis Monreal was here, the first director of the Getty Conservation Institute, Kurt used to say, "We're the only two directors with accents." But when he said this, he meant

more than just this linguistic touch. He meant, I'm sure, that he and Monreal possessed a European, cultured, sophisticated and educated something that the others didn't have. He often alluded to a relationship with Monreal that he didn't have with any of the others because Monreal could understand him, and he understood Monreal. But how much talk went on between Kurt and Harold Williams, I have no idea. Kurt must have been hired on the basis of something, but I don't know.

SMITH: Did he feel superior to Williams?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, I don't think there's any question about that. He never said so in so many words, and I certainly can't quote him in any direct way, but I think so. I'm sure he respected Harold for his financial acumen, for his knowledge of government and the ways of corporate dealings, and that kind of thing. I would imagine that he respected him for the way that he and Joe Kearns have managed the finances of the Trust, because they have done so well. But as far as intellectual level, my suspicion is that Kurt didn't think very highly of Harold's interests or tastes. But I never heard him say anything.

SMITH: The trustees had persistent questions and maybe internal debates over the size and the structure of the library, with I suppose a significant number of them questioning the value of having as large a library as it's turned out to be, and perhaps also questioning the value of special collections. Were you aware of that, and did that influence and interact with your activities?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, I was aware of it, because it would be reported from one source or another. Not officially. Well, no, I take that back. Somebody would come back from a directors' retreat or a directors' meeting and say that these points of view were being expressed: Why do we need so many books? What is the value of these rare things? Who's going to use them? If you have eight hundred thousand books, isn't that enough? When are we going to reach a point when it's enough? These questions came up all the time. My first reaction was a bad one, not politic; it was to ignore these questions and say to myself, and sometimes mistakenly to others, "Well, so what? These people don't know what they're talking about, they don't understand, they operate on a different level. We'll never be able to make them understand, so we're just going to continue to do what we've been doing and do the best we can."

Well, it's taken me a lifetime to realize that that's the wrong approach. You get nowhere that way. You only make enemies, and you don't accomplish anything positive. If I had the opportunity, I would do a lot of things over in my life. I would have a very different attitude toward that kind of mentality, which is very widespread. If you want to really accomplish something worthwhile, you have to make people understand. Preaching to the converted can make you feel warm and cozy, and that's necessary too, because you need the criticism of your peers, but whether you're explaining the law of gravity to a child, or you're explaining the need to build a collection such as the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities to a

rough neck oil driller who happens to sit on the board of trustees, if you can do that, you are doing something worthwhile. In a lot of cases, if you can get that oil man, who is used to dealing with nothing but the so-called bottom line, to really understand what you are doing, you are enriching that individual, and you are benefiting your institution.

SMITH: Did you have much personal interaction with the members of the board of trustees?

EDELSTEIN: Unfortunately not, and I think this is a major criticism which I would level at the institution. The only time we met, officially, were these show and tell kinds of things when they came around. There'd be dinners, and somebody would get up and give a little five minute address, or stand in front of a case and say something.

You know, the example of the government would have been a very good one. If, for example, there had been a meeting of the board of trustees at which certain questions were being deliberated, like, Why should the library of the Getty Center continue to build its collections on a certain level, a level requiring certain amounts of money? or, What is the need and purpose of artists' archives, institutional archives, dealers' archives? I think there should be a format by which the director can bring his core of experts along to be called upon if necessary during the discourse. If he does a good enough job, they may just sit there, but, if necessary, the director could say, "Okay, here I have a man, or a woman, who has spent a lifetime doing this sort of

thing, who has worked in many institutions, who perhaps could express a different point of view." I think that's the way it should be done. But it never happened.

SMITH: What kind of interaction did you have with people at the Getty Trust, other than Williams and Englander?

EDELSTEIN: I interacted with Joe Kearns, because his particular job is everywhere. I used to resent it when people talked about Joe Kearns as if he were a bank teller, dispensing money and not interested very much in anything. I always had a very different relationship with him. The few times that I met him at a Christmas party or at the Museum or receptions or that kind of thing, I liked him very much. Both Eleanor and I had exactly the same reaction to him. I found him a very warm, quite understanding kind of person. He was very firm, no question about it, and he took his job as guardian of the assets of the Getty Trust very seriously. He has obviously done a splendid job at doing that, but I didn't find him to be the ogre that everybody pictured him. I found him to be very human, very understanding, well spoken, a very pleasant man. I always looked forward to talking to him.

SMITH: What kind of questions would he bring up? Was he concerned about the rationale for a purchase?

EDELSTEIN: No, he was always funny. He would make a joke. He felt it was just one of those things that those academic types do, a sort of cross that he had to bear, and he hoped that we knew what we were doing. I reacted positively, as you might

expect, to the feeling that I always got from him; he let me know—not always explicitly—that he thought I was doing a good job. He was the only one who ever did. I knew from my performance evaluations that Kurt thought I was doing a very good job, and Tommy, when he was acting director, let me know that I was doing a very good job, but as far as people in the Trust are concerned, Joe Kearns was the only one who would say something, or he would express his support for me in such intangible but nevertheless real ways as a smile, or a handshake, or an attitude. He may not have wanted a position such as the one I occupied to exist, but the fact that I was in it was a good thing, and he liked me. I always have that feeling with him, and so I react positively toward him.

SMITH: Now his counterpart on the Center level would have been for most of the time you were here, Lynn O'Leary Archer?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. Lynn has been here a long time.

SMITH: Did her job actually affect how you approached the acquisition process?

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes, very much so.

SMITH: What kind of interaction then would you have with her and her staff? How would you assess how her personality and outlook on life have affected developments here?

EDELSTEIN: Very seriously. I don't know whether it's Lynn alone, or it's a combination of Lynn and the Trust. I rather think it's the latter, a combination. Lynn

is very, very smart. I like her personally very much. This is really going way out, but I think that perhaps she's really the smartest person around here in terms of her natural intelligence, her quickness, and her ability to synthesize ideas. I really think that she's very bright, very quick, and quite articulate. I think that she may be one of the few people around here who really knows what she wants for the Getty Center, and how to go about it.

SMITH: Did she communicate that to you and everybody else?

EDELSTEIN: She didn't make this an announcement, but her communication took the form of actions, to the extent that she runs the Getty Center now. And this is both good and bad.

SMITH: Did this start even while Kurt was director?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, but she started very slowly and carefully, and she has made herself indispensable. She was chosen because she was perfect for the job; she has enormous managerial and administrative skills, real talent. But then there was this added fillip of an academic degree. She's got a Ph.D. in U.S. Women and Social History. She's not a scholar, but she has that magic degree, and she would like to be a scholar. I think she reads a lot, or skims a lot, she goes to meetings, and I think she probably knows what's going on in her field of interest. It's almost never that I go into her office without seeing the "latest something" of enormous interest lying on her desk or sitting on her shelf—a review, a magazine, or a book. How much of this she

actually goes through I don't know, because we've never really talked about her intellectual or scholarly interests. So, in many ways, she was just perfect. Then there was that period, the interregnum.

Kurt took a long time to announce his decision to leave the Getty. This was a matter of great unpleasantness and resentment, because as it turned out he had made a decision but he let everybody believe that he hadn't and that it was still open for debate, so we had these long meetings and talks, here, or at his house, which went on until late at night. It was just very traumatic, and of course everybody wanted him to stay. There were very hurt feelings when people realized that he had already made up his mind anyway. So there was that period. Tommy of course was in a big dither because he didn't know what was going to happen to him. Was he going to get the directorship? Should he apply? If he was going to go away, this was the time to make the move, because of his age. He hadn't produced very much since he'd been here. I'm sure all this was on his mind.

So there was this situation, and Lynn began to consolidate her power and her control. I don't mean to imply that she *wanted* the power and the control; the place had to be run, and she ran it. Tommy was finally made acting director, and the two of them really ran the place. It was at that time that Tommy's interests began to have a different focus. For want of a shorter [explanation], it was Los Angeles, not the Center. He hadn't lost interest in the Center, but he became so involved with the

Gehry project and the music center and this urban program, and all that multicultural stuff. That's when Tommy really began to move forward in those fields, and then there was the selection of the new director and Salvatore Settis's arrival. Settis's first year was rather weak in terms of his work and what he could produce at the Center. All through these events, Lynn filled in as was necessary, through her own ambition, —I don't mean that unkindly, it's perfectly natural—and through her abilities. She really has been in a position of great power and great control here.

As I started to say earlier, at the same time, the role of the Trust in the life of the Getty Center has become much more dominant, in budgetary matters, administrative matters, how things are done, forms, all of that kind of stuff. Now this has a lot to do, I imagine, with the makeup of the Trust. Franklin Murphy is dead, Otto Wittmann is up in Santa Barbara, and some of the other old timers are not perhaps as active as these men were. The old [composition of the Trust] changed, and there's a new group—younger, much more technologically inclined, whose corporate experiences and habits are more obvious. How Harold Williams himself has changed, if he has changed, to accommodate this new group, is an unknown factor to me. I think what has happened is that this new trust has actually reinforced Harold's earliest propensities toward a bureaucratic kind of institution, where the corporate mentality is the paramount one, so that he can now say, without any qualms, if there were ever any, "You have 800,000 books. That's enough. There's no

room for more books in the new building at the Brentwood site."

In 1986, when I came here, the acquisition budget for the Getty Center was astounding: $13,000,000. It is now very close to becoming $4,000,000, and that has to go a long way. Obviously, this means enormous shifts in emphasis and purpose and quality as well as quantity. It's also going to be difficult because you don't fire people around here, so we have eight or ten curators now, who have less and less money, but they themselves are never fewer. So there's a lot of squabbling among them, and a lot of competition for fewer and fewer dollars. Since they are treated as equals and since their interests, their subject areas, and their expertise are treated equally, they have to do an awful lot of work to justify [their needs], on top of which, under the new regime, they are also supposed to be scholars.

SMITH: Active scholars?

EDELSTEIN: Active scholars. They therefore suffer from a certain kind of confusion which is brought about by the limitations of time and energy, because they have to do a lot of mundane, practical things. They have to go to meetings, they have to plan the move [to Brentwood], they have to help readers who use the collections, and they have to help process the material. They have to do these things *every* day. At the same time, they are supposed to be active curators and bibliographers, so they have to compete for that money, as they're each the equal of the other. They have to keep up with all the things that a person with those responsibilities would have to do:

read catalogs, go to book fairs, meet with dealers, travel, do all the things that developing a collection requires. Then they are supposed to be active scholars. Some of them are scholars and some are not. Some of them know how to put up an exhibition and some do not. Some of them can write, and talk, and some cannot. It's a mixed group. Salvatore, to a certain extent, is trying to deal with this, and Lynn is the one who is really trying to deal with it.

SMITH: But does she accept this policy?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, she has no choice about that.

SMITH: Well, when there are dual centers of power within an organization things can be *officially* accepted and then—

EDELSTEIN: Okay, that's a wise assessment on your part, you put it well. Lynn has managed to find ways around the official policy, and there's a certain amount of satisfaction. I guess she accepts it in the sense that it's the official policy, and how she handles it is the secret of her success. At first, she and Tom Reese were very, very unhappy with Salvatore Settis, for a lot of reasons. He wasn't here enough, he didn't listen, he didn't consult with them, he'd make arbitrary decisions, fast. In some ways they wanted to have everything; either he didn't do enough or he did too much. It was the usual really difficult shakedown period for a man in a difficult position: a foreigner, not used to American ways. He's a very sophisticated guy, and he'd been here as a Getty scholar. Salvatore is no babe in the woods. He's very sharp.

[Tape XII, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: So Settis's first year was very rocky. Even Harold in his conversations with me wanted my opinion of Salvatore, and how things were going. All that seems quite marvelously to have changed. I don't know whether Salvatore is smarter than everybody else, or he's just accepted a situation that exists. I think he recognizes that he needs Lynn very much. He needs her to run the place, in a sense. Now, it is an open question in my mind whether or not she is doing this with his knowledge or without his knowledge. Whether or not he is so smart that he's letting her think that she is, or he doesn't care, all these are open questions in my mind.

SMITH: But you've talked to all the people involved. I'm assuming you have conversations with Salvatore.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, I've talked to all of them.

SMITH: You talk to Lynn, you talk to Harold Williams, and so you may not have answers, but you must have surmises?

EDELSTEIN: Let's start with Tommy because he's the easiest. Well, actually, I should start with Herb Hymans, but it's almost a waste of time, because he's sort of out of [the picture].

SMITH: Well, he's being replaced vis-à-vis the scholar's program.

EDELSTEIN: Oh he's out of that, yes. He really should be let go, and I have so advised the president of the Trust and the director of the Getty Center, and everybody

else concerned about this. I think it would be best for him, for his health, and for his future, because I don't think he's a well man. He's got a lot of serious physical problems. He wants a sabbatical because everybody else has had a sabbatical. So I think they ought to give him a sabbatical and that would get him away for a year, at the end of which they ought to give him a "golden handshake" and a big thank-you, and let him go. At which point he'd move back to the Bay Area, where he comes from. He has a brother with whom he's very close. None of this would really be the kosher way to do it, but the Getty Trust and the Center have a long history of doing whatever they want to do, and whatever is expedient. I think it would be not only expedient, but the right thing to do. The point is, the man is suffering; he has nothing to do, really, you know. I think it's a crime to just keep this fiction up. All right, so that's Herb.

Tommy. I don't know, one of two things is happening. He may be resigned to this secondary role, and he may find enough satisfaction and fulfillment with these multicultural Los Angeles urban projects. He's got all these research assistants and projects, and he has his freedom. I'm in no position to comment on these projects, but I imagine they're probably all good, why wouldn't they be? Tommy's a man of interesting ideas. So that's one thing that could be happening. The other is, he could be gambling. The rumor is that Salvatore Settis has made a deal with the Scuola Normale in Pisa for a three-year leave of absence. He's in his second year here. So at

the end of his third year he's going to have to make a decision. If he decides to stay here as director, then okay, Tommy has, in a sense, lost a gamble, but he's still got his other life, which I'm sure is very gratifying for him. Salvatore gives him a lot of leeway and freedom here, and Tommy also does a lot of things on a directorial level. Tommy may not think that he gets enough feedback and communication and support from Salvatore, but Salvatore thinks that he does, and says so, to me, anyway.

SMITH: Do you think the Trust has allowed a dual function to develop at the Center?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, yes.

SMITH: So that, in a sense, two almost distinct organizations are operating within the Center.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, absolutely.

SMITH: Do you think that's by circumstance, or by decision?

EDELSTEIN: I think it's developed, and it's been accepted. No, I don't think it was a decision by any means. It didn't exist under Kurt Forster; it just happened. Had there been a different director, it may not have happened. At the end of three years, Salvatore may decide to go back to Pisa, or he may be so interested in the possibilities at the new site in Brentwood that he'll decide to stay. I don't know what will happen. It will be very interesting to speculate. If he goes, who would become the new director? Tommy was overlooked the first time I think for a lot of reasons, but the only reason that I know of, an outspoken one, was because he wasn't a European.

They definitely did not want another person with a strong Germanic orientation, but they did want a European. If the job is open again, I think Tommy would get it. I think he would get it on the basis of experience, availability, ease—all of those things. At that time somebody would think, "Now it's time for an American." Salvatore has had a lot of disappointments here. He hasn't filled my job yet, but they should be on the verge of announcing who the new assistant director for scholars and seminars is.

SMITH: It's already public I thought.

EDELSTEIN: Who is it?

SMITH: Michael Roth, from Claremont.

EDELSTEIN: Oh, I didn't see an announcement. Well, it's taken a long time. I don't know this man, and it's going to be very interesting to see how he and Reese react. Do you know him?

SMITH: No, he's a Carl Schorske student.

EDELSTEIN: I know that he's great, and I know that Tommy of course is a great believer in Schorske's work. That's very interesting. I'll learn more tomorrow, obviously. He probably won't start till September of this year. The next task is to fill my job. I know most of the people they're talking to; I've recommended most of them. So we'll see what happens.

[To reiterate], Salvatore has had a very hard time getting all the members of the staff who he thinks should be active scholars *to be* active scholars, but he's also

had a very rough time with Tommy and Julia [Bloomfield] about publications. This I think has a big role to play in Salvatore's assessment of things, and perhaps in his future. Things used to go quite smoothly with the Center's publications because it was such a closed little corporation, run by a committee of three: Kurt Forster, Tom Reese, and Julia Bloomfield. They had this program of seminars and texts and reprinting the great books in the history of architecture, particularly, that had been neglected or were difficult to obtain, that kind of thing, and then they took on this magazine, *Res,* which you know of course.

SMITH: Yes.

EDELSTEIN: So Salvatore walked in, and one of the first things he did, and this was very much resented, was to say, *Res* has got nothing to do with the Getty Center. He said we were just acting as a distribution agency for the Peabody Museum, and Harvard and whatnot, and it was costing a lot of money. So he abolished it. Well, the furor was enormous, but he did it. He had to do it more slowly than he wanted to, I think. I don't know whether the last issue under the Getty auspices has been issued or not, but if it hasn't it soon will be. He wanted to cut it off just like that, but for various reasons I think they said they had to do several more issues. So Settis agreed to that and it was finished.

He's quite pleased about that, because now the idea is that the Getty will have its own long awaited and necessary journal. I just hope it gets underway. It's going

to be a very, very rocky road to find the format, the money from the Trust, the kind of issues to be addressed in it, and all of those kinds of things. On top of which there's the matter of the look of our publications, a subject in which I'm very much interested, as you can imagine, and I don't know exactly what Salvatore thinks about them. Salvatore is very adept at making you feel good about what you're saying. I don't by any means mean to indicate that he's anything less than honest, or that he's Machiavellian about it or anything like that, but he does make you think that what you're saying is right and he agrees with you, yet the follow-up is sometimes very difficult to trace.

The Center publications have been dull looking on one hand, and on the other hand they have been so overdesigned that they've been illegible. The poster for new fellowship applications is printed on both sides—you know, a poster that's designed to be put up on kiosks and bulletin boards and one thing or another. Then there are the announcements that you have to hold up [to the light] in an effort to read them, and you don't know where the top is, and you have to turn it this way and that way and back and forth, or there's purple printing on black paper or black printing on purple paper, that kind of thing. There's been an awful lot of overdesign. I have great respect for Julia, I like her, I think she's a very hard working and dedicated, and quite a wonderful woman, but I'm afraid we don't see eye to eye on typographical styles or graphic design. We come from very different schools of thought in that

respect. I have expressed myself quite explicitly to Salvatore about this. I also expressed myself quite explicitly to Kurt about it, and I was cut down. This was one of the few occasions in our relationship in which he told me that I didn't know what I was talking about, and that I was being insulting to somebody who did know something about it, namely, Julia.

SMITH: And maybe himself as well.

EDELSTEIN: He was really quite upset with me, because I criticized these publications from the point of view of their looks. Settis and I talked about publications a lot, and he said he hoped that he would be able to find a place for me after I left, in some sort of advisory, if not actually editorial capacity as far as the journal was concerned. He would like the journal to reflect more about the holdings and the resources of the Center. I said, yes, I would be very happy to have some involvement. So I don't know what's going to happen.

Just last November I had an extremely interesting meeting with Salvatore about publications. We discussed many, many things. The matter came up of publishing proceedings of seminars and symposia. Salvatore was saying that some method needed to be devised so that these could be published in a much more reasonable amount of time than takes place now. To have an interesting seminar or a symposium take place and not have a proceedings published for four or five years is disappointing to say the least—to the participants, and those who were interested but

couldn't attend. The academic world is not noted for prompt procedures in this respect. People are constantly rewriting, or doubting what they said.

SMITH: It might not have as much to do with the author as with the Center.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, you're right. I can remember [Fritz] Neumeyer, who was here as a visiting scholar for a very long time. He just kept rewriting that book he did on that Berlin architect. That was really his fault. But I think there's plenty of fault to go around, and I was talking about that issue with Salvatore. I threw in a comment about the fact that there have been some symposia for which no intention has ever been expressed about publishing the proceedings at all. Salvatore said, "I don't know what you're talking about." So I explained that in the summer of 1992, after a year of active preparation, and after many years of thought and consideration, I put on a week-long conference here at the Getty Center called Reading and the Arts of the Book. It was enormously successful: speakers, symposia, lectures, readings. People came from all over the world. It was over-subscribed, and it was, I will say, immodestly, a great success. There were fantastic speakers, and great audience response. The Getty Center, the Getty Trust, and all the other entities of the Getty were very supportive. Harold gave a special budget of $100,000 for it, and I very proudly turned in, within days after it was over, a report on the costs of the conference, which came in $3,000 under budget. So this accounting was all done very promptly, and I had a spectacular crew to help me, and it was wonderful. I

couldn't have asked for more support or more consideration.

For almost a year beforehand I did very little else. You know, it was a big job, a week-long conference. You've been involved with things like that, so I'm sure you know. Aside from fashioning an intellectual atmosphere and a program, there is all the logistic stuff, the food and the drink, because it was all over the place; it was at the Getty Museum, and at this ladies' club, and here, and the Getty Conservation Institute, and there were visits to Paradise Press in Westwood, all over; it was wonderful. I gave the keynote address the first night. Robert Darnton came from Princeton and gave a spectacular talk, and John Hollander from Yale, Bill [William H.] Gass from Washington University, Maurizio Nannucci from Florence, David Godine from Boston, Tom Phillips from London, Anne Anninger from Harvard, and Lee Hendrix, the assistant curator of manuscripts at the Museum. It was spectacular. The last event was held at the Museum, and they had to put people somewhere else with a video because they couldn't get enough people in there. Leo Harris from the University of Chicago gave a wonderful talk. Bill Gass gave a brilliant, brilliant talk. It was one of those occasions when somebody finishes talking and there's this moment of absolute silence because people are so overwhelmed, and then there's this eruption of sound. It was really marvelous.

Kurt decided to go away at the time of the conference, which I resented. He was very supportive, he loved the idea, he gave me all the support I could ask for.

The one thing he didn't do was attend any of the sessions. He had to go give a lecture in Zürich or something, I don't know. I'm sure he had to go, but I was unhappy that he couldn't have arranged his schedule so that at least he could come hear my opening address, which was a summary of what it was all about: what I thought about reading, and its relationship to the cultural artifact that we know of as a book. I think I did a good job in trying to get all that into an hour. But then afterwards Kurt was very kind. He told me everybody had said wonderful things to him, and so on. I know that Françoise [Hahn], his wife, attended a couple of sessions.

There was a lot to do when the conference was over: recover, for one thing; get the reports out; wind things up and put everything away. I wanted to be sure that the financial report got back to the Trust in time. After a certain point, I guess it was in the summer, I began to ask questions. What I'm saying to the microphone, and to you, is really what I said to Salvatore Settis, who had not even been aware that there had been such a conference. To some extent I blame him. Why hadn't he informed himself of what's taken place in the ten-year history of this institution? On the other hand, I blame his colleagues, and/or his subordinates, for not informing him about what was an event. How many week-long conferences are there? He didn't know anything about it. But to continue, I began to make inquiries. When were we going to talk about publishing the proceedings of the conference? I know there were other things on people's minds, but couldn't we at least have a plan, a "some day" attached

to it? To make a long story short, I got nowhere. There just didn't seem to be any interest whatsoever from anybody, including Tom, Julia, and the people at the Trust. I mentioned it to Harold and was told there wasn't enough money. There was a possibility, if I could go out and raise the money. I didn't take to that, you know, because I went out and did all this work, I got all these marvelous speakers and participants.

So, nothing happened. The next thing I knew, in one of his corridor conferences with me, Tommy said, "Julia and I were thinking. That talk of Bill Gass's was so great, and we have this little series—" I've forgotten the name of the series [Angel's Flight: Occasional Papers from Los Angeles], but André Corboz did one with photographs of Los Angeles. It's a small series, intended to reflect a sort of spur of the moment piece of inspiration. André Corboz, the philosopher, was a Getty scholar here some years ago, and he wrote a very French *essai* on Los Angeles, even though he's Swiss. You know, the reaction of a European to this city, and some photographer took pictures. Which I don't like, because they all bleed [off the edges of the page].

SMITH: It's a very popular style.

EDELSTEIN: I don't like it as a consistent style. Maybe there's a place for it from time to time, but I didn't particularly care for it. So Tommy told me that he and Julia had been talking to Bill Gass because they thought they'd like to have his article in the

series. I told Tommy I knew that Bill Gass would say, "Do whatever you want," but that would spoil the proceedings. I said, "He gave a brilliant lecture, you and Julia obviously loved it; everybody was overwhelmed by it. You would be taking the jewel out of the crown." Well, Tommy said it didn't make any difference, and Gass didn't mind, and apparently he was going to send a revised version [of his talk].

I don't mind saying for the purposes of this oral interview about my history and relationship to the Getty Center, that I think it was probably at that point that I began to think, "I don't really belong here anymore." I was very, very upset. And nothing's happened. I've never heard a single word about the proceedings, and they have not published Bill Gass's talk. I was going to talk to him about it and tell him how I felt about it, but I never did that either. I may still do it, because we became friends as a result of that conference. But the thought that they would do this, and not even discuss it with me— I mean, I'm not the owner of intellectual property, I just put the thing together. But still, I thought it was discourteous, to put it mildly.

I told all this to Salvatore, much later, and his attention was really focused on it. He was scribbling away, taking notes. I'm having dinner with him Tuesday night, and we have a meeting Wednesday morning. I certainly intend to bring it up, this time in a very firm tone. I have a personal file of people who have written to me directly—twenty-five or thirty letters—saying, "That was such a wonderful conference. When are we going to read about it?" Or, "Can I have a transcript of

—" Last time I was here, in November, I had a meeting with Marcia Reed. She pulled open her file drawer and said, "Look, I've got six letters here from people who want to know if we're ever going to publish the thing."

Harry Reese, an extremely interesting man who teaches at UC Santa Barbara, wants to put out a journal called *Media Ecology*, and he would like the proceedings of the conference to be the first issue of the journal. I will look into it, I'm going to call him this week, but the proper thing would be for the Getty to do something. I don't know whether Salvatore has talked to anybody.

[Tape XIII, Side One]

SMITH: Is it possible that other entities within the Getty would very much like the Center's publications program to be axed completely?

EDELSTEIN: Well, the whole question of a publication program within the Getty Center is a delicate question because Kurt Forster did not want to have anything to do with any other publication program of the Getty Trust, in particular the publication program of the Getty Museum. He hated the publications of the Museum. He thought that they were banal, he thought that they were uninteresting, he didn't like the way they looked. The fact that the publications of the Museum are popular and sell, which is a big thing with the Trust, in contrast to those at the Center, was all the more reason for Kurt to dislike them. He didn't think that they had intellectual substance; he just thought that they were like all other museum publications.

I think the Getty Museum publications are a particularly good example of a genre which is essential. They advertise, in the best sense of the word, the holdings of the institution. But he didn't like that. He was very forceful and adamant that the Getty Center would be autonomous in this respect. Tommy agreed with him, and they got Julia, who of course agreed with them, because that was her *raison d'être*. I have never understood how they convinced Harold, but they did. So Harold funded it, with a lot of misgivings; in my hearing he was quite vocal about it.

There was resentment and jealousy on the part of people from the other entities of the Getty. Everybody thought that what the Trust needed in this case was some unity, that the various publications, whatever the source—the Museum, the Getty Center, the Center for Art in Education—should all come out of one publishing house. There would be a lot of advantages to that, especially economic ones, particularly in the matter of distribution. All of the publications have different distribution, and the distribution of books is an extremely complex subject. You go to College Art [Association meetings], and you see how book publishers run an enormous expense getting big halls so that they can display to the visiting members their latest publications. Sometimes you have to search for the Getty. You may find the Getty, but it'll be the Museum publications. Where are the Getty Center books? Well, somewhere in a far corner in the back. They don't stand out. These things are very touchy.

So there was a great deal of resentment, and there still is. It's been more subdued since Kurt Forster left because he was neither politic nor tactful. He felt that the publications of the Getty Trust, but particularly of the Getty Museum, were worthless. Tommy and Julia went along with this attitude and echoed it, so for a long time, both within and without the Trust, in the publishing world, there was a lot of confusion and unpleasantness about the Getty Center's publications. What Salvatore will do finally, I don't know. He has found it hard to make changes. When he came in he announced there were going to be these great big changes, right away, or as soon as possible, and there have been very few of them except for *Res*, which is finished. But we still have no journal. That takes a long time, and this is his second year, but there's nothing planned on the books that I know of.

SMITH: The proceedings of your conference?

EDELSTEIN: I'd like nothing better, but by the time I get all those people to send me their rewrites, their revisions, their changed points of view . . . you know, that sort of thing doesn't happen overnight. I'm not going to do it on speculation. People have asked me about that. Maybe my attitude is wrong, I don't know, but I don't want to do it on speculation. I've got other things that I can do and have been doing that are very gratifying and I can see real results. I think actually my disappointment was so great that I just sort of said to hell with it. I really was very disappointed.

SMITH: Could you talk a little bit about Tom Reese's relationship with Kurt Forster

and where Tom fit into Kurt's vision of the Center and the kinds of changes that Kurt wanted to bring to art-historical scholarship in the larger world?

EDELSTEIN: That's a tough one, because, to tell the truth, I can't imagine that Tommy was Kurt Forster's choice for that job. They got along very well; I mean, they used to have their quarrels, the inevitable kind of thing, but they really got along very well. Tommy became very much Kurt's man, but aside from a way of thinking which enables both of those men to almost automatically make an abstraction of an issue or a point of view, I don't know that they have all that much in common. That ability to think in abstract terms, of course, is very, very important and they both do that. Tommy does it almost to an excess, I think, but he can also be very practical, when it comes right down to it.

I think that Kurt found it very useful to have Tommy around. Kurt's terms of reference were often so all-encompassing and far-ranging, and Tommy has the ability to synthesize ideas at meetings and in groups of people. Have you ever watched Tommy at a meeting? He doesn't do what I'm doing. He doesn't doodle. He makes diagrams. He diagrams what is being said, so that when the meeting is over, or the discussion is over, he has immediately in front of him a diagrammatic outline of what has been discussed or proposed, and it's a great talent. I think Kurt could ramble and range in diverse cultures in order to bring in examples of what he might be trying to explain or elucidate, but Tommy, when it was all over, would have a page in which

the relationships were clearly defined and he illustrated how one thing fit with the other. So that was very good.

In some ways, I think the adjustment was Kurt's adjustment to Tommy, not the other way around, because of Kurt's enormous range of interests and understanding of the things that he was interested in. When he found that he had on his hands this scholar who was interested in everything "Kublerian," if there is such a word, and who was interested in what was then, in the late eighties, this phenomenon of multicultural studies, I think that what may have happened is that he said, "Okay, I'll use him this way." On the other hand, Tommy recognized Kurt's achievements and his interests and values and what he intended for the Center, and although he may not have had the same kind of experience with them, he found them congenial.

You know, Tommy and I came here on the same day in '86. At that time his actual knowledge in areas in which he has now become quite expert, was not very great. I think particularly of the whole Warburgian world. Tommy's an educated man, I'm not saying that he had never heard of Warburg and the Warburgian concept of the classical tradition, but I don't think Tommy knew the extent to which this approach affected so much active scholarship, as it did in both Kurt and Salvatore's world, but he learned very, very quickly. Tommy quite purposefully, in his first years here, made sure that he came to understand pretty much everything that was going on in this place. He had very little interest in the category of resources that I and others

have given an enormous amount of emphasis to, in every sense of the word; that is, the place of festivals. Our resources reflect that, and Tommy has made himself quite expert. But then his particular interest in colonial life, particularly in this country, and the history and growth of cities, urban studies, was a nice fit with Kurt Forster's architectural history, which was much more particular, whereas Tommy's was much more general. It was very easy for Kurt Forster to talk about Giulio Romano, and Tom Reese to think about Giulio Roman in terms of the Renaissance city—that kind of thing. So I think they quickly found a rapport which made it easy for them to work together. On top of which, Tommy represents an old school of relationship between teacher and student, and supervisor and supervisee, and that sort of thing. I don't think there was ever any question in his mind until very late in Kurt's tenure, who was boss, and whose point of view prevailed.

SMITH: You said that you don't think that Tom was Kurt's choice for the position. Do you have reason to believe that there was another candidate?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, yes, it's a matter of historical record. Do you know Cathy [Catherine] Zerner?

SMITH: No, the name rings a bell, but I'm not placing it right now.

EDELSTEIN: I think she was Kurt's choice. She is a professor of art history at Brown University. I see her from time to time, crossing campus we run into each other. I'm not absolutely sure of my facts here, because the stories were flying

around very loose and fast, but I think she accepted the job, and a day before she was supposed to come, or a day after she came, she turned it down. Why, I don't know. Maybe she thought she'd miss academic life.

SMITH: She already had a tenured position?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, she had been at Brown for a long time. So Tommy was, in a sense, very much a second choice.

SMITH: But Kurt's second choice?

EDELSTEIN: I assume. Now he may have been on that "A" list in the beginning, I don't know, but in the same way that I don't know how I got here, I don't know about that either.

SMITH: To what degree did you think that Tom started to develop his own autonomous interests during Kurt's tenure?

EDELSTEIN: To a great degree, and with Kurt's blessing. Anybody could do anything they wanted under Kurt's directorship, as long as they also did what was necessary to keep the place running. Kurt didn't like unpleasantness. He didn't like unpleasant surprises; he wanted to be kept informed so that he wouldn't be embarrassed in front of Harold, or the board. It's easier to explain in terms of my own relationship with him. When I first started I was in his office all the time asking his opinion. He would say, "Great, do it." If I wasn't sure about something, he'd say, "Well, you make your decision, and I'm sure I'll agree."

SMITH: Was there ever any time when he might have said, "Not great," or "Wait a minute"?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, but those were times when the question was in my mind. No, the Aldo Rossi business was the only occasion when there was a disagreement.

SMITH: Which we've discussed.

EDELSTEIN: There are many areas I know nothing about, which are of interest to the Center. But that's why we have all these people. So I would say, "I don't know, I need your help." And Kurt would say yes or no, with a reason: "This is outdated scholarship; or, "This is bad scholarship," or, "We don't need this." It got to the point where Kurt would say to me, privately, and sometimes publicly, "Mel and I don't have to meet. He knows what he's doing, he's doing a great job, everything is fine." I had mixed feelings about this, because while I found this very flattering, and it certainly made my life easier, I needed give and take. I don't always need give and take. There are times when I know I'm right and I don't want anybody to say, "You're not." I confess to that failing. But mixed with that too is the feeling that I like to have a lot I can learn, and I like to talk about it. There were a number of times when I would have preferred [more dialogue].

Kurt read bookseller's catalogs, and he read auction catalogs. You could see him every day downstairs on the fourth floor looking through the new batch of auction sale catalogs. So I'd get a catalog, and scrawled on the outside Kurt had

noted, "See nos. 6, 25, 38, and 84." So I'd look at it and with a great feeling of accomplishment and self satisfaction, I'd send it back to Kurt saying, "We have three of those four already, you'll be happy and proud to know, and I ordered the fourth one just before your note came." I loved doing that; it made me happy to know that I was on the right track as far as my director was concerned. So, in a way, I encouraged him to spoil me. I don't want to play it too much on one side or the other, because both sides are important. But I was aware of what was going on, and I didn't doubt for a minute, and I don't doubt now, that the course that I set for the development of the collections when I was here was the right one, and the fact that I had the director's confidence was just fine. But perhaps if we had some good basic discussions about what we were doing, [it would have been helpful]. We used to have good discussions in this room about the selection of fellows but, little by little, Kurt gave it all over to Tommy. I guess he was beginning to get tired, beginning to think of other things, Zürich maybe, who knows what. But at first it was heaven. We had all these fellowship applications, and everybody had to read them.

SMITH: I thought that people didn't apply to be fellows.

EDELSTEIN: Oh, yes.

SMITH: Oh, okay. I'm confusing the fellowship with the scholars program.

EDELSTEIN: Right. We did the same with the scholars program, but they weren't applications. We'd come in here, and brainstorm. "Are we going to have a theme

next year? Okay, we're not going to have a theme. Who do you think should come?" We'd all come in with lists, we'd go over these people and their publications, and we'd read. The amount of reading that I got done here in the early years was phenomenal. I'm no art historian by training, I'm not a philosopher by training, but what I learned at the Getty Center was I think more than all my other educational experience put together, in terms of knowledge, facts, and ideas. I was very proud that several of the people I suggested were in the scholar's program. I wrote down William Gass and Kurt said, " Fantastic. Great. What's that book he wrote?" I said, "*On Being Blue*. Do you know it?" So then Kurt, who's a great one for going off on tangents, would start at the beginning of the book and practically relate the entire thing.

So we'd read all this stuff, we'd talk and talk about it. It was wonderful, it was so stimulating. It was at those meetings that I felt that the real work of the Getty Center was being done. That's where the life of the mind was taking place and being lived. We were reading, many of us, certainly in my case, in areas about which we were totally ignorant. From literary criticism to Nietzschian scholarship to all the deconstructionist stuff. I was absolutely ignorant in these areas. I had even shunned them because I didn't know anything about them and they were difficult; it was hard stuff. And I knew nothing about urban studies either.

SMITH: But for the scholars program, you must have had, what, five, ten times the number of names at a given time?

EDELSTEIN: Oh God, yes.

SMITH: All these people possess a level of brilliance and accomplishment, so that you could almost just throw darts and be fine. What was the process of choosing x instead of y?

EDELSTEIN: The most important consideration was, what could they accomplish here? What intellectual provocation were they capable of initiating here, and what intellectual amalgam would result from the fact that scholar x from Romania, who is interested in a subject here, is going to spend a year next to scholar y from Oshkosh, who's interested in something similar, or something so dissimilar that there still might be a spark. That was the process, and we'd talk about this. We were looking not only for what was new, but what was new and different, and we tried to avoid just making these scholarships merit awards.

SMITH: Well, to a certain degree they are.

EDELSTEIN: Well, yes, because we started off with people who were already [distinguished]. Now I understand that you can apply for the Getty scholar's program.

SMITH: This year, the coming year.

EDELSTEIN: Is that going to be the only one?

SMITH: It's because of the special circumstances of the move, and maybe also the theme.

EDELSTEIN: There's no question that merit was involved because they were always senior people who had achieved something, but we didn't want to just emphasize that. I remember very often during the discussions somebody would say, "Oh yeah, but that guy's just got a MacArthur fellowship," or, "He's just come off an NEA grant," or, "He's got a Guggenheim," and we would close our eyes to it. That shouldn't enter the picture whatsoever. Unfortunately, the practical matters of availability had a lot to do with it.

Then of course there were some people who wouldn't be part of this thing. The Dutch year was very interesting, because Svetlana Alpers wouldn't come that year if Gary Schwartz was going to be here. Well, this contradicts what is supposed to be the norm in an intellectual world where differences of opinion can be discussed in open and civil terms. But she wouldn't come. So they allowed her to come the following year, and she set a very bad record here because she was the one who destroyed quite a number of books from the library in order to take them out. You know, there's a rule, you may argue about whether it's good or bad, that nothing leaves the building. But she said that she could only work in her apartment, and she had to have these books. She was told, no, the rule was the rule. The books have devices in them that ring bells if you go through the detectors, so she proceeded to rip them out, practically destroying the spine and whatnot—none of which was discovered until it was time for her to leave, and she returned all of her books, with

no apology whatsoever. Wasn't she back here again when Michael Baxandall came?

SMITH: I don't know if she was officially a scholar.

EDELSTEIN: I was all for prohibiting her to enter the place.

SMITH: I would think that would be sort of mandatory, given the situation.

EDELSTEIN: So there were these little practical considerations. But those were wonderful meetings.

SMITH: What did you mean when you said that the scholarship should not only be new but also be different in some way?

[Tape XIII, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: It can be "new" in the sense that it is part of a progression. By "different"—perhaps that's the wrong word—I meant it was taking an old established canon and using it not just to add new information or new insights from it, but going off in an entirely different direction. We were looking for a spark that showed some real originality. I don't know how to define it better, but I think it has to do with not only being a scholar in whatever field this person had made a reputation, but being a scholar who is actively interested in using all the resources of every possible discipline to look at his or her particular subject in other ways.

SMITH: But how would you know where to draw the line between "different" and "eccentric"?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, I don't know. I think we had a couple of eccentrics as a result of

not knowing how to draw the line.

SMITH: And that's probably okay.

EDELSTEIN: Sure. I think that on the whole, if you review the scholars that we had here at the Center, it's been a fantastic group, and a very productive one too. There were a couple of eccentrics, there were a small number of real deadhead, dull types who were not interested in others and were not very communicative, and didn't understand the Getty Center. But in many institutions with similar programs, all you need to do is show up, and sometimes you don't even need to do that. You show up, and you get your books or your documents, and you go off to your study and do your thing. That was not what we wanted here. What we wanted was communication. We wanted exchange, and we wanted something to come out of it, some spark. I think for the most part we got it. Sometimes more and sometimes less. Some years were wonderful, and some were just sort of ordinary. A lot depended on personalities, too. You never know about these kinds of things.

The Latin American year was fantastic. Jorge D'Alba, who is now at Berkeley, came here from Princeton, a brilliant, brilliant man. I don't like him, I think he's an arrogant man and an arrogant scholar, but be that as it may, he's stimulating. Ramon Guttierez was interested in everything and everybody. And there was that wonderful woman from Argentina, Margareta Gutman. That was a spectacular year. The Dutch year was wonderful too. That fantastic guy, Michael Montias, was here

from Yale, who studies Dutch seventeenth-century painting from the point of view of an economist. That was a really great year, and there were others.

SMITH: What would be your take on the so-called "scholars' rebellion" that took place?

EDELSTEIN: First of all, it was taken too seriously. I thought these people should have been told that they were acting like spoiled children, and they should have been reminded how lucky they were. I thought everybody responded much too seriously to this. If they didn't like it, they could go home; their transportation was provided for. I don't recall now anything that happened or was said during that so-called scholars' rebellion that was serious. I thought it was all childish.

SMITH: Do you think that it was just a fluke of the personalities involved?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, yes.

SMITH: So you don't think it represented some sort of underlying tension that might have been there from year to year?

EDELSTEIN: I can't say that there was no underlying tension that could have been there, because before that scholars' rebellion there was that article by an anthropologist at Rice University, talking about how much money was being spent, and the corporate mentality of the Trust and that sort of thing. I think that that scholars' rebellion, mostly a group of German scholars, was a fluke; it had to do with those particular individuals. But there was also an historical element which added fuel

to that fire, and that is that from the beginning the largesse of the Getty has played a negative role in the public relations aspect of things. The conspicuous consumption I think could have been toned down a bit. Not because there might be scholars who would eventually revolt or be upset about it, but because basically I didn't think it was right or necessary. It wasn't always necessary to have wine with every meal, or even the best wine with every other meal. It wasn't necessary to send travel tickets or paperwork by priority overnight Federal Express months ahead of time. [laughter] For a while that was just standard operating procedure. There was the usual folklore about how you couldn't trust the Italian mails and that sort of thing—some of which is true, but they did this even when they were mailing within the United States. That's expensive, when you add it all up. So there were things like that. From the beginning there was this atmosphere of excess. But I didn't find this revolt to be about anything serious. There was nothing about ideas. Nobody was saying, "The Getty is imposing its point of view on our work," which would have been a very serious thing. They did say there wasn't enough access to the director, he didn't come to their tea parties, he didn't show up at their programs, and this is criticism that I think the director should take seriously.

SMITH: But wasn't that at the time that Kurt was exiting?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, but we used to hear that before, too; that was a persistent criticism. I have mixed feelings about it. Yes, it would have made the scholars

happier if Kurt had been around to talk to them about their work, and he did when he was here, when he felt like it, and when he had the time. I don't feel that anybody's work suffered because Kurt or anybody else wasn't always available as a sounding board or a critic. They may have felt that they were missing out because they couldn't hear Kurt talk about something, but considering all the positive things, and all the advantages which were given to them, I thought that the criticism that was being levelled was really out of place and should not have been taken seriously.

SMITH: Another topic. The 1992 riots seem to have had a profound impact on Harold Williams.

EDELSTEIN: Oh, yes.

SMITH: I wonder about the degree to which you saw directions in the Getty changing because of his personal response?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, that was a crucial time here, and it was very influential for the course of Tom Reese's work because, in a way, it was an opportunity. It really allowed Harold and the Trust and all the entities to make the institution a part of the city. I don't think it was successful, but I think that the intention was good. I don't think it was thought out sufficiently well. A lot of actions that were taken were the kind which could have been predicted and were certainly expected. You know, a million dollars to rebuild a school or a library, and these various outreach programs. Well, it's always been my contention that what the Getty as an institution needed to

do was not outreach but reach in, bring in. I think the Museum has been making a big effort, but I still don't think it's enough. The Getty Conservation Institute I think has been the most successful of the entities, because it's a subject that people can grasp.

The current director there has made an effort to involve the community, but the Getty's problem with respect to the community is that it represents money and an elite culture. Now, I don't think it's the role of the Getty to go out and do good works. If a million dollars here, or five million there were needed to help build a new school and the Getty could do it, fine, great, but it should have done more. The biggest problem that the Getty has is to make the community understand what it is and what it does. This is a problem which is from my point of view exacerbated by the great monument being built up there in Brentwood, a monument which I think only confirms in a lot of people's minds the distance, in every sense of the word, that the institution has from the city. It's difficult to get to. You can't get to it by public transportation. That cuts out an awful lot people. It's in an expensive area. I think it's going to be very hard for the Getty to overcome the popular conception of its elitism. I don't think it's going to go away until some very clever person or group of persons finds a way to make everything that we do here not just relevant but interesting to the community, and understandable.

It all starts with the young. Sure, they bring kids to the Getty Museum, kids take tours of the GCI and all that kind of thing. I'm not an expert in this field; I only

know what my mind, my experience, and my heart tell me. I used to be very much interested in this question of involving the public at the National Gallery of Art, the Library of Congress, and other places where I've spent periods of my life. You bring people into a great library or museum, and I'm not just talking about children, and there they are, surrounded by something which is unfamiliar, and, in a way, everything that's unfamiliar is frightening to one degree or another. The tour guide will say, "Here is all the knowledge in the world, and we have computers and you can find out anything you want to know here. You can find out about your ancestors, you can find out about the country your grandfather came from. If you want to see pictures of whatever, you can find them here. You can have stories, experiments, science, laws—anything in the world." People look at the exhibits, but nothing takes away the fear that an uneducated or an unknowing person who doesn't know how to use the catalog feels. The guide tells them they can use the computerized catalog, but they don't know how to use it. Someone might say to himself, "I'm just a simple person. Look at all these people with degrees, who speak without accents." You know, all of these elements come into it, so they walk around through all this, and it's all very unfamiliar to them.

Somehow or another this has to be overcome, and it has to be overcome particularly with children. With children it's easier, because children are curious, and they have an open mind and they don't have a lot of prejudices yet. The parents of

those children should also feel comfortable and welcome in that environment. So you get a group of people and you bring them from the barrios and you take them to the museum and you show them these masterpieces, and they are impressed with the wealth and the luxury and the beauty, and they're instilled with a sense of awe, but something is lacking. They don't feel that they can come back on their own—assuming that they have a way of getting there, which is no small assumption, you know, since there's no public transportation there.

I don't know the answers, Richard, but I just know that this is one of those really big problems, and if I had been a wise man, and if I had had the power, I would have taken what happened in 1992 as the opportunity. First of all, I would have said, "We made a mistake. We're going to use that money and we're going to turn this museum into a didactic institution. I know it has an education department, I know those people work hard, but I would have taken that opportunity almost to the point of dropping everything else, and said, "Out of adversity we have a golden opportunity to make museums, libraries, and scholarship have meaning for the community." We had a chance to explain what we do here in the Getty Center. I think it's worthy, and it's important to explain it.

SMITH: Clearly, Kurt didn't think that was important.

EDELSTEIN: No.

SMITH: I don't know about Settis's attitude.

EDELSTEIN: I don't know either, but I doubt that he's a populist. I'm not all that much of a populist myself, but I think that this is one of the big problems of our society today. It's a difficult problem. I'm all for the life of the mind, you know, knock on wood. I've been able to spend my life with books in universities, in museums, in research centers, and all that has been fine, but I had a very hard time, it used to tear me up inside, trying to explain to my father what I did. My mother was different. I was a scholar, or I was involved in scholarly things, which is the more accurate description. That's all that she needed, that made her happy. My father was a different matter. It pains me to this day that I could never really explain what I did. I mean, of course I told him what I did in detail; I told him, to the minute, how I spent my day, and he would say, "You know, that's not work." But that wasn't the important thing; it's just that he never really understood. I always felt the fact that he never really understood was my fault, not his, because he was an intelligent man. He used his intelligence, he reasoned. He was not an educated man, but he was a well-informed man. So it's that kind of thing . . . how to explain. Here we are, spending our lives in the midst of these great resources, talking to one another. Increasingly, in the last few years, I've been thinking about this, and increasingly I've become more and more dissatisfied, wondering how it can possibly be changed. Now maybe it's a futile way to spend my time, but I do think about it.

SMITH: I'd like to shift gears a little bit to a couple of odds and ends that were left

hanging last time. When we left off, you had still two big projects that were up for decision. One was the question of the Grabar collections, and the other was the Max Bill archive. I'm curious, what happened to those?

EDELSTEIN: Well, I can tell you, with a great deal of pride and a sense of accomplishment, that the Grabar project has come to a successful conclusion. The Max Bill archive is increasingly doubtful, unfortunately. I went to Europe last September on behalf of the Getty. I had a number of projects to look into, and one was the Max Bill. If Max Bill had not died, things probably would have worked out very differently, but, as people do, he died, and his estate has become terribly complicated. He married, late in life, a young American woman, Angela, who I mentioned earlier. She was very nice, but strange. She has a personal sort of buddha that she prays to, and she's waiting for her buddha to tell her what she's supposed to do. And then Max Bill's middle-aged children from an earlier marriage have come out of the woodwork. They had never shown any interest before, and they want parts of the estate or they want things done with it.

Then the city of Zürich and the surrounding canton, never having paid much attention to Max Bill before, have decided that his house should become the Max Bill Museum, devoted to him, his art, and his collection. He had a very beautiful house, which he designed, you know. He was an architect among all the other things. His house is filled with the most spectacular art, not only his own, but he was a great

collector. He has, incidentally, one of the world's finest private collections of Cycladic art; it's just unbelievable stuff. Room after room of gorgeous things. So it's been proposed that his house become a museum, and the neighborhood doesn't want it, because like all neighborhoods there as well as here, they're afraid of too much traffic and all that bullshit. On top of which, the estate simply hasn't been settled yet, so nobody knows what's going to happen.

I don't know how long the Getty will be patient. In my last year-end report for my consultancy I just said that they'll have to tell me how long they want me to pursue this, and whether or not they'll want me to go back again and see what I can find out. It would be a great acquisition, even if we could get a part of it. We're not interested in the art work of course, only the documentation. I'm getting increasingly doubtful that anything will come of it.

But the Grabar libraries have been acquired, finally. It was a tiresome, frustrating, very long, procedure, but it's done. Now, whether or not everybody has been paid in time, I don't know. So I'm going to answer your question by going on to another subject, in a sense. It has to do with two things: it has to do with the way the Getty Center operates now, the way it's being run, and this goes back to the earlier discussion, when we were talking about Lynn. I don't mean to indicate that she is a culprit, or the only one, if there is a culprit in this respect, but she sits at the top of this triangle of responsibility. It has to do with that, and it has to do with my

present relationship with the Getty, and also, to a great extent, about why I left. A lot of what now characterizes the way the Getty Center operates was first becoming apparent to me in 1992. As I've said before, I think the lack of reaction to that conference into which I poured so much of myself was the beginning of it all.

[Tape XIV, Side One]

EDELSTEIN: Why did it take so long to make up the collective mind concerning the Grabar library? These are functional matters , matters of process, and it very much affects my relationship to the Getty, and this consultancy. It's now a collective mind that makes a decision. But why did it take so long? Of course, there are fundamental issues, you know, the eastern Mediterranean, Byzantium, Islam—these are new areas. Do we want to go into new areas, what does this mean for the future? We can't just do this in isolation, we have to think about how we're going to continue our relationship with other institutions, all important questions. But still, Grabar began to be talked about in the winter of '91. In July 1992, I had a long talk with Oleg Grabar at a conference. He cornered me and asked, "Are you people going to buy the library or aren't you?" It wasn't until late '95 that the decision was accomplished.

There were great objections to it. I was very unhappy about it because I didn't think the objections were valid. Kurt had expressed his delight in the possibility. When it first came up he was still here and we talked about it. This would be one of the major achievements of the Center. This library is incomparable. We

had the opportunity to check it thoroughly against UCLA's great Byzantine and Islamic collection, the bias of which is quite different. Grabar's agent, Ars Libri, in Boston, is going to take back all the duplicates. Still, a lot of people objected because it's a new area, besides which, somebody would say, "I have other new areas that I think are more important," and so on.

SMITH: When you say, "a lot of people," are there particular people?

EDELSTEIN: Oh sure. Claire Lyons, Joanne Paradise, Fran Terpak—

SMITH: So it was the curators?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, yes.

SMITH: En bloc, or a majority of them?

EDELSTEIN: I don't know if it was a majority or not, but they have the opportunity at council meetings and whatnot to state their opinions. I knew Kurt wanted it. And Salvatore Settis said it was an absolute must, and, for better or for worse, I knew that this was right. I felt absolutely right that this was perfect for us and was an extension of our other interests and a natural way to go.

SMITH: There is something that I'm unclear about. I can understand there being big collective discussion and input, and then once the director makes a decision, why wouldn't that simply be it, as it was with the Aldo Rossi?

EDELSTEIN: Because Kurt left, and Salvatore I guess just because he was new didn't feel that he could do that, and the fact that I had said yes no longer carried the

weight that it did. The temper of the place had changed. Now the role of the council was not only to give counsel, but to decide. There is nothing which is bought now, whether it's a several hundred thousand dollar purchase, such as the Grabar, or a seventy-five dollar book, which is not decided by the council.

Everybody has a small amount of money which they can pretty much spend on their own. Okay. When it was first announced that they were going to do things like this, it was a way of avoiding the step which I insisted upon, which was reviewing everything. So with all this reorganization, with the additional new technologies that are available to us, all the computerized techniques, the length of time that it takes to make a decision is unbelievable. Now, over the past year, in the first year of my consultancy, I have been hounded by my former colleagues in the trade, who say, "What's going on now? I sent a letter three months ago. Not only has no decision been made but nobody answers. I offered this most fantastic thing, and I can't get an answer. Who is responsible? Who is in charge?" That's one set of problems. Or it'll be something like, "They answered, but they told me that I obviously don't know my field because the price is not right." Now, I can understand the way we used to do it. We'd say, "I'm sorry, we can't afford it." You don't tell a dealer he doesn't know how to price something that he's been pricing for thirty years, or whatever. Then it would proceed to, "Mel, can't you do something about it? It's three months since I sent this thing on approval. They took six months to decide that they wanted it, and another

month to argue with me about the price, and I finally relented because it belongs at the Getty, but it's been three months, and I've got other customers. I need the money." Something shouldn't be standing in an institution on approval more than a week. Then it proceeds to: "Mel, can't you talk to anybody? Who can I call? They said they are going to buy it, but I haven't gotten an order." All right, it's been months, and he hasn't gotten the order. Then it proceeds to, "Mel, what should I do? I got the order, I shipped it off, and I haven't been paid for three months. I'm running a business. Isn't there something you can do?"

I spent a lot of time last year listening to this kind of stuff, from many sources. I would get on the telephone, and then I would call Wim de Wit, who's in charge, temporarily anyway, and I'd get the excuse. Sometimes a good one, sometimes a bad one, sometimes an indifferent one, sometimes an "I don't know." Sooner or later, something would be done. I'd get on the telephone, or I'd write, and if I wrote I always sent copies of everything to Salvatore, Lynn, and Tom. It's an excess, but I just wanted them to know what was happening. I do have confidential conversations with Salvatore, but these other things I sent to everybody. This has been going on and going on, and it started even before I left. Because of the new arrangements, the new forms, the new systems, everything has to be discussed endlessly. Everything has to be discussed fully at the council by the members of the council, the curators. The budget has been divided up so that everybody has a more or less equal share, so

there's this sense of equality. There is no controlling person in terms of creating a direction for the way the collection is going, so the discussions go round and round and round until a decision has to be made.

There is, quite justifiably and quite understandably, a desire to move away from Mel's ways—sources, contacts, points of view, etcetera—because times have changed and it's different. That's perfectly reasonable, and I don't have a quarrel with that. Most of my last visit out here was devoted to conversations with Lynn, Tom, Salvatore, and Wim de Wit, about the need for the nature of my consultancy to change so that I would be less involved or not involved in what they call the acquisition process. Well, to cut the story shorter, I knew of course what was being talked about, so I said, "Okay, I understand. All these people have to grow, they have to make their own way. They have to make their own contacts."

Ever since November I have resisted [involving myself], but the problem remains. I still get all of these problems relayed to me. I got two complaints on Friday. Mr. Holstein in Berlin calls me and says, "You told me that it was an order, why have I not even received the order?" Then Andreas Brown said, "You remember a year ago I told you about the unpublished letters of Frank Lloyd Wright to his first wife when he was courting her?" I said, "Yes, I remember." And he said, "Well, I've never heard from anybody. What's the name of that Dutchman?" My answer now is, "Sorry, I can't do anything about any of those things anymore." And it's right that I

can't. The ties have to be cut.

I read just as many catalogs, see as many dealers, go to as many book fairs, go to as many professional society meetings as I ever did. Things come to my attention which should be added to these collections. How am I supposed to manage this? Don't I have some right to know what happens? I can't be satisfied by just dropping these pieces of information into a well that has no bottom. So I don't know how to handle that. Part of my year-end report includes my ideas about how the consultancy can be changed. First of all, I could be given editorial responsibility for the publication of the proceedings of my conference. Secondly, I have a lot of ideas about exhibitions, particularly the inaugural exhibition, which I understand they want to be about the resources of the Center. I said I liked that kind of work and I could help them with that. I said I had lots of ideas about future scholar years, and about possible publications. I said we could talk about those things, and if they found them satisfactory, I'd be happy to continue.

In a very contradictory way, at the same time that all these people want to be given their own space, as the phrase goes, and room to grow in terms of developing the collection, I got a telephone call from Joanne Paradise before I came out here in November. She asked if we could spend a half hour or so together, and I said sure. She wanted to know if she could come along with me the next time I went to New York, or to a book fair, to observe how I comported myself with the dealers and to be

introduced to the people she may not already know. I said sure, why not? So what is my point in telling you all this? It's not to complain, really, about whatever this relationship is, because a lot of it is as much my fault as it is the Getty's. I retired, I was asked to be a consultant, and I liked that. I think I'd be very unhappy if I didn't have some relationship with the Getty, so a lot of it has to do, quite obviously, with my own inability to let go, which sooner or later I'm going to have to do. But it's hard, it's very hard. So in some ways I'm lucky that I have this kind of relationship. At the same time it's very frustrating to be a consultant and not be listened to.

SMITH: Presumably then, when the position is filled, you would be redundant?

EDELSTEIN: Right.

SMITH: And would that person then also be in charge of the curators?

EDELSTEIN: Yes. Well, I wouldn't be redundant if my new role becomes an acceptable one.

SMITH: Right.

EDELSTEIN: I wanted to tell you a story about the way the Center is operating and has operated for the last couple of years, which I find very unfortunate. Even before the wall came down between the two Germanys, it occurred to me that there was a culture—in the anthropological sense—over there in East Germany that existed in our own time, when all the troubles started and then the wall came down, and wouldn't it be a fantastic opportunity to document that culture and the special relationship that

exists between culture and politics? So I went to my friend Jürgen Holstein, from whom we've acquired many things, and I went to a number of other people, including some East Germans who had gotten into West Berlin. In that year or two before the wall came down, there was a lot of movement back and forth. I talked to them about it and I said, "Let's start putting things together. Go to retired government officials who have taken all their papers home and stored them in the attic. Go to artists, go to galleries, go to cultural institutions. Just take everything you can get—posters, books, papers, every kind of documentation that you can find." Everyone thought it was a great idea. Carl Schorske, Horst Bredekamp, and Martin Warnke thought it was a great idea. Warnke became the Getty's chief rival for this material. Everything I didn't buy, he bought.

The stuff began to come in, it began to add up, and there was a terrible outcry. Kurt thought it was fantastic. We now have here at the Getty Center the best documentation on the cultural life of the former East Germany that there is anywhere, including anywhere in Europe or anywhere in Germany as it now is. It was thanks to my idea and the hard work of these people, particularly Holstein, and it was no accident that I chose him. He's in Berlin, and he's a ferret. He's one of these people who's really dogged, and he just loves what he does. He devoted two years to doing nothing else but gathering this stuff together. I didn't discover until after the fact that there was enormous opposition to this acquisition, that there were curators who were

doing everything that they possibly could to stop it. I was spending money that could be spent better on other things, and so on.

Well, it was sort of my last hurrah. I just said, "This is it." There was just no question about it. Whatever I did worked, and we got it. The collection has become well known, it has been written up in lots of places, and is being very heavily used. It's a huge, phenomenal archive. Last summer, Holstein wrote to me and said, "Guess what? I've found another little batch of stuff; it'll be the last, there's nothing left." He was digging around and he found this guy who had a little archive, and it was a nothing price—$15,000. So I said, okay. Nancy Perloff, one of the curators, was going to be in Berlin in June, so I asked him to show the material to her, as a matter of form because we were going to buy it. I was already out of the picture, so I didn't really have the authority to decide this, but it was inconceivable to me that this last little blank piece of the puzzle shouldn't be filled in. So Jürgen Holstein offered to show it to Nancy, and when she got there she said she was there to look at another archive and nothing else, and besides, we already had enough of this DDR material. So Jürgen let's me know about this pretty fast. She came back, and I got in touch with Wim and asked him what this was all about. He said, "Well, we were discussing it in the council, and everybody thinks that we have enough of this DDR material." I said, "Wim, what do *you* think?" He said, "I'm waiting for the council." I never got an answer, and this is not untypical. In the meantime, Holstein was bugging me:

"Yes, no, what?" Wim called me one day and said, "The council has decided that we're not going to buy that DDR archive because we've got enough and money is so short and we need it for other things."

By this time it was close to November. I wrote up a long memo, and I send it to Salvatore for his eyes only, saying this was unconscionable. I told Salvatore I had $15,000 left over in my so-called personal fund, this amount of money that each curator has that they can spend without consultation. I wrote out the whole thing; it must have been a six-page memorandum, and he must have been bored stiff with it. He knew all about it because I had also written to Horst Bredekamp and asked for his help; he and Salvatore spoke to each other a lot. I asked Salvatore to give me permission to spend my $15,000 on this archive, so that there would be no further discussion and it would be a done deal. I asked him to think about it. I couldn't believe that crazy excuse that we had enough already operated.

When I got here, Salvatore said, "Buy it." That was November. I said, "Salvatore, you have to do something for me. You are really going to have to be directorial and say to Wim, "We're going to buy it." He did that, and I went to my conference with Wim, who said, "Okay, Mel, here are the forms. You just have to fill in the space called 'justification.'" I said, "Gladly." This was in November. The day before yesterday [January 5, 1997], I get a telephone call from Holstein. He has not yet received the order form.

SMITH: What does Lynn O'Leary Archer have to do with this process?

EDELSTEIN: Every piece of paper, every piece of paper. You see, the big complaint was that Mel reviewed everything. Occasionally I said no, or I questioned it. So instead of coming to me for substantial review, it now goes to her for administrative review.

SMITH: And does she have a position on issues of this sort?

EDELSTEIN: No, she doesn't take a position, but there's still that delay, you see. Salvatore said to me, "Look, surely you realize that this is a way of cutting themselves off from you." They have a council meeting, and they send me the notes from the meeting. Somebody at the council meeting says, "It's time that we developed new sources, that we deal with new dealers." On the face of it it makes sense. We should always develop as many new sources as possible. But when you find that in your town Max the butcher has the freshest meat, and the best stuff, maybe you'd like to give your business to somebody else, who's closer, or whatever, so you look around, but if Max the butcher always has the best meat, do you say, "Sorry, Max, we've done enough business with you; we're going to somebody else now." It doesn't make sense. If Holstein says to me, "I'm never going to offer the Getty another thing. I never hear from them and they don't answer my letters," what am I supposed to do? Jürgen Holstein is phenomenal at his job. Yes, he's a businessman, he makes a profit, but who can quarrel with a deserved profit? We give obeisance to the capitalist

system, so he makes his profit. But he's not a robber and he does a super job.

So I read these meeting notes and I hear these comments from Holstein, and I feel very badly. It's not just the personal reaction that I have, because, you know, there's a lot of me in this institution, and I want that quality preserved, I don't want it to become, historically, an aberration. I don't want this place to be ordinary, and I'm afraid that's the way it's becoming—all of that coupled with an enormous reduction in the budget, and with the idea that an institution that has a backlog is obviously not doing its work. I take the point of view, and I think earlier at some point I said this, that an institution that doesn't have a backlog is one that's not healthy, quite the reverse. The resentment about the Grabar archive is still deep because it means that money which somebody wanted for his or her favorite little topic, or favorite big topic, is not going to be available if we have to continue to build in this field. Well, thank God there's nothing more to build as far as the DDR is concerned, it's done.

[Tape XIV, Side Two]

EDELSTEIN: For myself the future is clear. Sooner or later I'm going to cut the Center off. Coming out here, especially in the winter, is all very nice, but it's not the real world anymore, and there will be an end to my usefulness.

SMITH: There are eight curators, right?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, I think.

SMITH: How many of them did you hire?

EDELSTEIN: Claire [Lyons], Fran Terpak, and Marcia Reed were already here. I hired Kevin Salatino, Charles Meriwether, and Nancy Perloff. Claire , Marcia, and Fran are now curators in this reorganization, but they were not under my supervision at all; they were members of the special collections department, which was separate. Maybe it still is, I don't know. They were not bibliographers. The whole history here is so complicated.

SMITH: Myra Orth seemed to be the one who had the strongest scholarly record.

EDELSTEIN: Yes, and still has, and we're very good friends. How she'll be replaced I don't know.

SMITH: Could you outline, including Orth, what strengths these people brought to the collection, and what you felt were areas of weakness that concerned you as their supervisor and colleague?

EDELSTEIN: Nancy Perloff I hired because she's very much a modernist. She's by profession a musicologist. I think she's got her Ph.D. now from UCLA. She's the daughter of Marjorie Perloff, incidentally. Do you know her?

SMITH: Yes. I know Marjorie. I don't know Nancy.

EDELSTEIN: When I hired her it was with the idea that since musicology was going to be such strong field here, we had an opportunity to get somebody who seemed to be good, and interested in modern music. We already had bits and pieces of material. We had a lot of John Cage stuff in the Fluxus collection, and that kind of thing. So

we have this person, and it hasn't really worked out the way we planned, be that as it may. Her strength is as a scholar in those fields. Her weakness is that she gets mired down in details, and she is slow. It just takes her too long to either grasp what needs to be done or to do it. But she's a bright young woman, very nice, and I just hope that it works out.

Joanne Paradise has been here a long time. She has a Ph.D. from Stanford. She was here before I and she was in the special collections under Nicholas Olsberg. She knew Kurt I guess when he was at Stanford. Her specialty is French nineteenth-century culture, but she ranges far and wide. She could be a very productive scholar, but she isn't. I don't know what holds her back. I think more emotional personality problems than other things. Whatever the reason, she's not as productive as a scholar as she should be. She's very productive as a collection development person, though. So those are her strengths. I hesitate to talk about people in terms of weaknesses, but she has a very fragile personal make-up and it gets in the way of her progress. She takes things much too personally, and it's upsetting. Sometimes it's not easy for her to work with other people.

SMITH: Was she the one who was responsible for getting the archives of the Fondation Wildenstein?

EDELSTEIN: She is now. That's since my time. I have the feeling too, that it isn't that she resents my legacy, but she is one of the people who I believe feels strongest

that it's time to put it in its place and go on in different ways. She has not been helpful with respect to the Leo Castelli archive, which has not been completed, and should have been years ago. They're still monkeying with it and monkeying with it, and finally they hired an outside appraiser, because they thought I was willing to pay too much money. The appraiser came up with a figure about a third again as much as the original figure. I can't remember exactly what my figure was, maybe it was $1,800,000, but the appraiser's figure was $2,500,000.

The appraisal is a long document in which the appraiser says this is one of the greatest archives. It's an absolute must for the Center, following the Panza archive and the other big modern archive . . . I can't remember the name. Considering what we already have, it would make the Center *the* place for the study of twentieth-century American art. So I don't know what they're going to do, but I wrote immediately to Lynn because Leo Castelli himself, and his lawyer told me they will not ask for more money and to please get it settled before he dies. The man is eighty-seven years old. They may ask for a small sum to pay Castelli's legal fees, which the Center required them to incur over the last year or so, what with all these changes. So, if we don't get it, it would really be a crime.

SMITH: Are there curators other than Joanne Paradise who are actually opposed to getting it?

EDELSTEIN: Meriwether is opposed. Most of these people feel that it's a lot of

money. Yes, $1,800,000 is a lot of money, and if you only have a $4,000,000 budget— Of course we don't pay it all at once, it's going to be over a period of years, but it's still a lot of money. Nobody talks about the value of the archive, but it's a lot of money and it's going to take up money that could be used on other things.

Myra Orth is gone, and she was a very important figure here, a very productive scholar, a medievalist. We need another medievalist and what they'll do about replacing her, I don't know. She had weaknesses too. She despised administrative work, hated meetings. She would do anything and everything she could [to avoid these things], and she has a wonderful sense of humor, but a sense of humor which a lot of people don't appreciate. She used to get on the nerves of Kurt and Lynn and Tommy a lot, because her humor is very biting, and if one were uncharitable about it, it could be interpreted as insubordination. But it was never that, she always did what she had to do, but she made fun of it, and people don't like being made fun of.

Claire Lyons is great at what she does, but she's very selective about what that is. She is very good at avoiding the things that she doesn't like to do. She had a difficult history, which has improved enormously I'm very happy to say, but for a long time she had a hard time getting along with everybody else.

SMITH: She was your assistant for a while?

EDELSTEIN: Yes, and it didn't work, because she didn't know how to relay

instructions without sounding officious and upsetting people, and she was very quick with her criticism. But I think she's very happy now, because she has a great rapport, because of her archaeological interests, with Salvatore, who likes her enormously. But she does work very much alone on the things that interest only her. She does a lot of things outside, with Salvatore's approval, things that have to do with the Medieval Academy, and lecturing. She just spent a couple of months at Brown, and she loved that; she had a grant to do some studying there.

Marcia Reed is and always has been, and maybe always will be, a fascinating and interesting problem. She's the curator of rare books. She's not a scholar. I think she feels badly in this company, many of whom don't hesitate to point out her scholarly record, but she is one of those people who is indispensable here.

SMITH: She's trained as a librarian?

EDELSTEIN: She's trained as a librarian. She has an institutional memory of course, which is so important, and she has a real feel for books, and good books. She has, I don't know, that undefinable kind of quality that enables her to recognize, even at a great distance, such as a dealer's catalog description, something important. Mostly her value lies in that she knows what we have and don't have. Her weaknesses are that she's quite opinionated, and . . . it's very interesting, she's almost always right when it comes to older material, and very frequently wrong about modern material.

SMITH: Yet she's in charge of the Fluxus material.

EDELSTEIN: Oh yes. Her interest in the modern material is very much resented by a lot of these other people who don't feel that she knows enough about it. I don't know whether this is right. I alternate about Marcia. There are moments when I adore her, there are moments when I can't stand her, but for the most part, I think she's a great asset to the place.

Fran Terpak is an enigma to me. She has a nickname among her colleagues here; she's called "Frantic Fran," because once she gets into something she gets frantic about it. She's a bulldog, she never lets go. If she comes up with a proposal, it can be voted down from now until eternity, but she'll never stop pursuing it. She's almost more proprietary about her interests in her funds than any of these other people. She's very slow to give up anything. Very often the curators have to give up something, a sum of money for instance, to share for a common purchase. Fran is very knowledgeable. She has a Ph.D. from Yale in art history, as a medievalist, but through one reorganization or another she became curator of photographs. I don't know what she knew before, but she knows an awful lot now, and she's learned it on the job and has done very, very well. So I would say that her only real fault is this tenaciousness, which sometimes not only trips her up herself, but gets in the way of other people.

Kevin Salatino has a Ph.D. from Penn in Renaissance art history. He's particularly interested in graphic arts. He's got a very good eye, he knows his stuff.

He's very, very good when he's good; his problem is that he doesn't work hard enough. How he finds anything in his office, I don't know. He wants to read every book there is, and maybe he does, but he needs to be better organized. It takes him a long time to get something done, because he's constantly going from one thing to another.

Charles Meriwether may have been a mistake on my part. He's a Latin Americanist. He knows an awful lot about Latin American history, and almost everything else mentionable, and this is where the problem comes in. He's very political, and he is not happy here; he told me so in November. He feels he's being wasted. He's really no longer interested in collection development. He's always writing position papers about things. I think he's brilliant, but I think he may be right that he doesn't belong here. He shocked Salvatore Settis by telling him he was too busy to read booksellers' catalogs, he didn't have the time. This is unbelievable, you see. Why Salvatore didn't do something about it, I don't know.

SMITH: Do Meriwether and Tom Reese have common interests?

EDELSTEIN: They did, until Tom realized that Charles was really a threat to him. Charles isn't liked very much, I don't think, by the others. I think he probably feels lonely. I liked him, and in many ways I still like him. I hired him, and the whole idea was that he would concentrate on developing our Latin American holdings, which are not inconsiderable; they're not great but they're not inconsiderable, and they deserve

to be strengthened.

SMITH: To what degree over the last ten years have the curators been torn between conflicting institutional priorities; that is, scholarly pursuits, collection development, participating in the life of the community—

EDELSTEIN: They are torn by this extensively, and every day. This is the biggest and most consistent complaint I hear all the time. Too much is asked of them. How can they go to numerous and endless meetings about what color toilet paper we're going to have in the new building? I exaggerate of course, but there are all of these meetings that have to do with the move, or what kind of automation system we're going to have, or collection development, or serving the public and communicating with the Getty scholars and the Getty fellows, and meetings about extending themselves in some sort of multicultural way. The demands are enormous, I don't know how they manage.

The person who is suffering and does least well at all this is De Wit, you see, who also should be on this list. He is the nominal head of this group and he has a consistent reply to my former question about why somebody hasn't heard from him: "It's here on my desk, I just haven't been able to get to it." I believe it. It is somewhere on that desk, or in the system. As I see things here now, I imagine that probably six or even seven hours of Wim's eight-hour day are spent at meetings. It's unbelievable, I don't know how they can do it. The pressure is on them to do

exhibits—that's another thing—to give lectures, to give demonstrations, to participate in outreach programs, to go to scholarly conferences, to read catalogs, to know about auctions, to keep up with the literature in their fields and others. I don't know how it's going to be rearranged. Michael Roth, and whoever they get to replace me, have a big, big job on their hands.

SMITH: Two questions come to mind. One, to what degree does this pulling and tearing come out of Kurt Forster's original utopian vision of how the Center should operate, and secondly, what is it in the Center's structure that has prevented clear priorities from being set?

EDELSTEIN: I'm not sure I know how to answer the question. I am sure that some of this is a result of this vision of Kurt's, but I don't want to lay too much emphasis in that direction because Kurt may have had that vision, and he may have articulated it, but he didn't make the demands on the staff that the present structure now makes. The problems that have descended upon the Getty are structural, financial, and logistical. The logistical one is this business of the move [to the new site] and what I believe was the mistaken need of making everybody responsible for it. Everybody has a big responsibility, and I think there are other ways of doing it. This is not the first institution to make a big move.

I believe that it would have been done better if the Getty, with all of its great financial resources, had gone out and hired a company that specializes in moving. I

don't mean Bekins, I mean *planning*. It would be made up of architects and designers and all that, you see, and it would be their responsibility. They would have come around and taken a certain amount of time asking questions: who are you, what do you do, what kind of facilities do you need, etcetera. Yes, that would have taken time, but nothing like this, nothing like now. I'm sure they would have needed a separate building just to plan everything, but they would have done their thing, and then they would have hired Bekins, or whatever company, and done the move. They would have said, "You are going to go here, and you are going to do that." That's the logistical issue.

The financial problem speaks for itself. It's hard to pare down, even though it's been done gradually. There is the pressure of having to prioritize, knowing that in the background there are these powerful voices calling out for no growth at all, and they are getting louder. I've talked about this before. Who are we going to be if we don't buy?

The structural problem has to do with a lack of direction within the Center. Yes, Salvatore, bless his heart, has written a wonderful mission statement, as good if not better than Kurt's, and everybody understands that, but there has to be a way to make it concrete, you know? I think it's a very serious matter that at one end of this hall is an archaeologist and a scholar of Greek and Roman antiquity, whose mind is well formed and operates in this Warburgian world, which is more important to him

than anything else, and at the other end of the hall is the deputy director, who is aware and in agreement with all of that, and sympathetic and knowledgeable, but whose life is mixed up with such a diverse and different world.

Then in the middle is Lynn, a very, very good administrator, whose control is so wide and so deep that I think it's very hard for the staff to know who's in charge and where they're going. Kurt had it easy, you see. He had his mission statement, and all these intellectual plans, he hired a bunch of good people, each of whom was in charge of his own area, but that doesn't exist anymore. And then of course there's the technology business, and we've got a bunch of technocrats and budget people who call the plays. So I feel very sympathetic. I have criticisms of this group, which I've voiced, but I feel very sympathetic toward them; I should think it's very, very hard.

SMITH: When we last talked it was over the phone, you said that the key to your personal identity was your relationship with the poets and the avant-garde, Dick Higgins and the Jargon Press and that.

EDELSTEIN: I did?

SMITH: Yes, you did say that. Quote, unquote: "key to personal identity."

EDELSTEIN: Oh, really?

SMITH: Yes. So I was wondering how that quarrel within you works when you're in a corporate structure such as the Getty, which is both scholarly and bureaucratic?

EDELSTEIN: Well, when I was here, as before, my identity was bound up with

books, with art, with literature, with printing . . . and it still is. I still read booksellers' catalogs. When I left the Getty I said, "Keep me on your mailing list," and I imagine 99 out of 100 have. A few lately have been dropping me off because they realize I no longer have any authority. I still talk frequently with Dick Higgins, and even more frequently with Jonathan Williams, the Jargon guy. Since getting back to Rhode Island, I have become very friendly with James Laughlin, and I see him as often as possible. He lives up in Norfolk, Connecticut, so it's a bit of a hike. I still collect for myself. I do very much what I always did, whether I worked here or not, but on a much reduced scale, of course.

SMITH: But when you're with Laughlin or Higgins or Williams, does the Getty stuff all slough off and you're another person?

EDELSTEIN: No, the Getty stuff will never drop off, never. I don't think it will ever change; I will always have somewhere in my mind an idea that a certain manuscript would fit so nicely in the Getty Center collection. We started an archive of Dick Higgins material; they wrote to him and said, "Sorry, we don't want anymore; we have enough." We started the archive of Claude Fredericks, the strange man from Banyan Press, who's been keeping a diary since he was ten years old. The diary is extremely interesting because he knew everybody. It's restricted because he's homosexual and he was [initially] worried about that, but he's less worried now. But they told him as well that they didn't want any more material.

SMITH: They've got some of the diary?

EDELSTEIN: They've got some of the diary, but they're not going to buy any more. This has affected my relationship with him, because I don't think he wants to talk to me anymore; he hasn't answered my notes. When I telephoned him I noticed that the conversation was very brief, almost curt.

I will always be interested in the welfare of the Getty, particularly, if not *only*—I should be honest about that—the welfare and the development of its collections.

SMITH: What effect did Stanford's million dollar purchase of the [Allen] Ginsberg papers have in the manuscript collecting market?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, very little. I can't really speak knowledgeably about it, Richard, because I didn't know the archive. I don't know how much is in it, and I had never talked to anybody at Stanford about it. If this was truly a complete archive of Allen Ginsberg's life as a poet, from whenever he started to keep pieces of paper to the present, I don't think a million dollars is excessive. Yes, it's a high price, but I think it's in the ballpark.

SMITH: So nobody feels, "Oh, now I can get more money for—"?

EDELSTEIN: Oh, people always think that. When we started this conversation today, I think you started with that. There are people at the Center who feel that we made mistakes. It's tremendous hubris on my part, I confess, but I felt that I knew

sufficiently well what I was doing, and I felt that the other people who worked with me knew sufficiently well what they were doing. Surely we made a mistake or two, but we knew enough about our subjects and about the material and its monetary and scholarly value that we didn't overpay.

We started off with the *Transsibérien*, and we paid a lot of money for it. At that point a copy had not appeared on the market for x number of years. I did a lot of research, finding the history of this book from day one. Perhaps as a result of our purchase, other copies have since appeared, and they have not been selling for more. The same things happen in this world as happens in any world where it's a matter of supply and demand. If there are more copies, the price goes down. So what criticism could be leveled at me? We shouldn't have bought that one, the first one that appeared on the market? We should have waited an indefinite period, maybe ten years, and then we might have been able to buy it for $80,000 instead of $97,000? The last copy or two I think sold for something like $85,000. It hasn't gone up. Now, maybe a copy will show up that has marginal annotations by who knows who. Okay, then that would increase the price.

SMITH: When you were at UCLA, were you involved with the collection of the [Kenneth] Rexroth or the [Edouard] Roditi papers?

EDELSTEIN: Yes.

SMITH: Did you know Rexroth or Roditi?

EDELSTEIN: I knew Rexroth. I didn't know Roditi; I had met him and I had gone to readings that he gave. I knew Rexroth because it was through him that I met Jonathan Williams. Lately I have finished reading the fascinating correspondence between Kenneth Rexroth and James Laughlin, and I have been talking about that a lot with Laughlin. In 1957 I was living in Washington, working at the Library of Congress. Rexroth was giving a reading at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and I went. At the end of the reading I guess I had a book for him to sign. He was standing around talking to people, as everybody does after a lecture, so I went and introduced myself and said I was a collector or a fan, you know, small talk. Whatever I said appealed to him, and he said, "A group of us are going down to Martin's, in Georgetown, to have some supper. This is a man you should meet, Jonathan Williams, a poet and publisher. We're all going, why don't you come along?" And that was the beginning.

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